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Musica Celestis: Mystical Song In Late Medieval England

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Abstract

Medieval music is difficult. When performed, its harmonies are often pretonal, its rhythms obscure, and its language frequently Latin and religious. Its theoretical framework is an abstract language of geometric proportions and arithmetic ratios. When Boethius articulated his taxonomy of music - a system that undergirded all Medieval musicological writing - he divided it into three types, and the first two made no sound at all: *musica mundana* was the music of the spheres, a harmony produced by the motion of celestial bodies so rarified that human ears did not have the ability to perceive it; *musica humana* was also phenomenally silent, referring to the continuous musical performance of the human soul as it resonated with the body. Only the third and final type, *musica instrumentalis*, was what we might consider "music" proper: sung or played melodies and harmonies. This dissertation argues for a fourth type of music implied, but almost never explicitly named, by Medieval thinkers, and one which generates much of Late Medieval English devotional and mystical literature. This is *musica celestis*, or, as I have chosen to call it, mystical song. Mystical song is produced by God and his angels in heaven - beings without corporeal bodies - and exists beyond the world of material being. However, beginning in the early fourteenth century, a number of English authors claimed to hear it during mystical experience. This dissertation charts the wide-ranging effects of *musica celestis* in devotional, mystical, liturgical, and literary writing from the beginning of the fourteenth century to the beginning of the Reformation in England.

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MUSICA CELESTIS: MYSTICAL SONG IN LATE MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

Tekla Lenore Bude

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MUSICA CELESTIS: MYSTICAL SONG IN LATE MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

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Mulier cum parit, tristitiam habet, quia venit hora ejus; cum autem pepererit puerum, jam non meminit pressurae propter gaudium, quia natus est homo in mundum. – John 16:21

Steering anything difficult to a good end is a painful endeavor, but the resultant joy is such that the memory of that same pain disappears. I am thankful to all those who have helped me through the dark times and the aches of the last few years, and who now, I hope, can share in even a little of my joy.

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ABSTRACT

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David Wallace

Medieval music is difficult. When performed, its harmonies are often pretonal, its rhythms obscure, and its language frequently Latin and religious. Its theoretical framework is an abstract language of geometric proportions and arithmetic ratios. When Boethius articulated his taxonomy of music – a system that undergirded all medieval musicological writing – he divided it into three types, and the first two made no sound at all: *musica mundana* was the music of the spheres, a harmony produced by the motion of celestial bodies so rarified that human ears did not have the ability to perceive it; *musica humana* was also phenomenally silent, referring to the continuous musical performance of the human soul as it resonated with the body. Only the third and final type, *musica instrumentalis*, was what we might consider “music” proper: sung or played melodies and harmonies. This dissertation argues for a fourth type of music implied, but almost never explicitly named, by medieval thinkers, and one which generates much of late medieval English devotional and mystical literature. This is *musica celestis*, or, as I have chosen to call it, mystical song. Mystical song is produced by God and his angels in heaven – beings without corporeal bodies – and exists beyond the world of material being. However, beginning in the early fourteenth century, a number of English authors claimed to hear it during mystical experience. This dissertation charts the wide-ranging effects of *musica celestis* in devotional, mystical, liturgical, and literary writing from the beginning of the fourteenth century to the beginning of the Reformation in England.

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PREFACE

Spiritual Music and Angels' Song

This dissertation is about music without the body in the medieval period. Music had always, from its earliest manifestations in theory and practice, required bodies, and the Christian world had always been anxious about this reliance – and the potential of bodies, moved by music, to fall prey to carnal desire.¹ When Boethius wrote his *De Institutione Musica* in the sixth century, he created the rubric by which the incorporation of medieval music would be understood: Boethius' taxonomy divided music into three types, each of which was dependent on the resonant space of a different sort of body. The first type of music was the music of the spheres (*musica mundana*), the sound of planets and stars as they made their way around the heavens. The second type of music, human music (*musica humana*), was the emanation of the noncorporeal soul from the human body. The third type of music was instrumental music (*musica instrumentalis*), or played and sung music as we understand it today.² *Musica mundana, musica humana,*

¹ Music, after all, is number and proportion specifically inhering in something, as Isidore of Seville says in his *Etymologiae*, “*Musica est disciplina que de numeris loquitur qui ad aliquid sunt.*” See Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiarum*, XX.xxiv, *Patrologia Latina: The Full Text Database* (Ann Arbor: Michigan), Col.0142C. Contemporary criticism has followed suit, monographs, articles, and papers on the role of the body in musical performance between 400 and 1600. See Holsinger, Bruce. *Music, Body, and Desire in medieval Culture: Hildegard von Bingen to Chaucer* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); Leach, Elizabeth Eva. *Sung Birds: Music, Nature, and Poetry in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007); Leach, “Gendering the Semitone, Sexing the Leading Tone: Fourteenth-Century Music Theory and the Directed Progression.” *Music Theory Spectrum* 28.1 (2006) : 1- 21.

² *Et prima quidem mundana est, secunda vero humana, tertia, quae in quibusdam constituta est instrumentis, ut in cithara vel tibiis ceterisque, quae cantilenae famulantur. Et primum ea, quae est mundana, in his maxime perspicenda est, quae in ipso caelo vel compage elementorum vel temporum varietate visuntur. Qui enim fieri potest, ut tam velox caeli machina tacito silentique cursu moveatur?... Humanam vero musicam*

and *musica instrumentalis* were three different types of sound inherent in the physical bodies that filled the created universe.

It was with his definition of another tripartite division, however, that Boethius set the tone for the metaphysical desires and capacities of medieval music. Musicians, too, were of three types. The first, and lowest type of musician was the person who merely played an instrument or sang, without understanding; the second was the man who composed songs; the third, and most laudible, was “that individual who evaluated the work of the performer and the songs.” The first and second types of musician were both deficient. One lacked rational understanding of music, the other, though a poet, was someone “who possessed not so much a propensity for thinking and reason as a natural instinct for song;” while he had a rhetorical skill, his metrical capacity was intuitive mental potential rather than a fully-fledged art. Only the third type of musician, who was “steeped in reason and thought,” could properly be called a musician in every sense of the word; his knowledge was abstract rather than particular, mathematical rather than physical.³ Though the body was central to music, the best musician was the one who

quisquis in sese ipsum descendit intellegit. Quid est enim quod illam incorpoream rationis vivacitatem corpori misceat, nisi quaedam coaptatio et veluti gravium leviumque vocum quasi unam consonantiam efficiens temperatio? Quid est aliud quod ipsius inter se partes animae coniungat, quae, ut Aristoteli placet, ex rationabili inrationabilique coniuncta est? Tertia est musica, quae in quibusdam consistere dicitur instrumentis. Haec vero administratur aut intentione ut nervis, aut spiritu ut tibiis, vel his, quae ad aquam moventur, aut percussione quadam, ut in his, quae in concava quaedam aerea feriuntur, atque inde diversi efficiuntur soni (Boethius, *De Institutione Musica*. Ed. Godofredus Friedlin. Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1867. I.ii. pp. 188-9).

³ *Sed illud quidem, quod in instrumentis positum est ibique totam operam consumit, ut sunt citharoedi quique organo ceterisque musicae instrumentis artificium probant, a musicae scientiae intellectu seiuncti sunt, quoniam famulantur, ut dictum est: nec quicquam afferunt rationis, sed sunt totius speculationis expertes. Secundum vero musicam agentium genus poetarum est, quod non potius speculatione ac ratione, quam*

surpassed corporeality in his understanding of it. As music extended past the body and into the immaterial intellect, it became more properly musical.

Six-hundred years after Boethius, the body appeared in medieval music pedagogy again:

naturali quodam instinctu fertur ad carmen. Atque idcirco hoc quoque genus a musica segregandum est. Tertium est, quod iudicandi peritiam sumit, ut rythmos cantilenasque totumque carmen possit perpendere. Quod scilicet quoniam totum in ratione ac speculatione positum est, hoc proprie musicae deputabitur, isque est musicus, cui adest facultas secundum speculationem rationemve propositam ac musicae convenientem de modis ac rythmis deque generibus cantilenarum ac de permixtionibus ac de omnibus, de quibus posterius explicandum est, ac de poetarum carminibus iudicandi. Ibid. I.xxxiv, pp. 224-5).



University of Pennsylvania MS Codex 1248, fol 122r

This is a Guidonian hand, the graphic tool used to teach sung music in the West from the eleventh century through the sixteenth. The invention of this singer's "manual," and by extension, the musical staff, is attributed Guido d'Arezzo (d. after 1033), a Benedictine monk. Guido and his monastic brethren must have found chant-singing to be a tiring discipline: it required hours spent within the choir, learning a years' worth of Mass and

Office chants by rote, memorizing antiphons, hymns, and processional chant-tones without the aid of the determinate semiotics of diastematic neumes.⁴ This is because singers in Guido's day did not have a musical stave or a form of notation that could guide them without a teacher's presence; musicians were unable to "read" new music through the abstraction of intervallic relations in written form. Instead, music was particular to its place and time, a practice of physical bodies existing in proximity to others who had, in turn, had the music passed down to them.⁵ Singers were always of the first, and lowest, type of musician in the Boethian hierarchy. Music lacked an alphabet, so Guido provided singers with one: from the eleventh to the sixteenth centuries the Guidonian hand was used to teach schoolchildren how to read music. It was the most concise recension of musical notation, and it was also a means of bringing the body into systems of written music.

The Guidonian Hand, and by extension Guido d'Arezzo, became mnemonic superstars, so much so that one anonymous fourteenth-century music treatise opens by stating: *Qui nescit palmam, in uanum tendit ad musicam*, "He who does not know his

⁴ *Temporibus nostris super omnes homines fatui sunt cantores. In omni enim arte valde plura sunt que nostro sensu cognoscimus, quam ea que a magistro didicimus. Perlecto enim solo psalterio omnium librorum lectiones cognoscunt pueruli, et agriculture scientiam subito intelligunt rustici. Qui enim unam vineam putare, unam arbusculam inserere, unum asinum onerare cognoverit, sicut in uno facit, in omnibus similiter, aut etiam melius facere non dubitabit. Miserabiles autem cantores cantorumque discipuli, etiamsi per centum annos cotidie cantent, numquam per se sine magistro unam vel saltem parvulam cantabunt antiphonam, tantum tempus in cantando perdentes in quanto et divinam et secularem scripturam potuissent plene cognoscere.* See Pesce, Dolores, Ed. *Guido d'Arezzo's Regule Rithmice, Prologus in Antiphonarium, and Epistola ad Michaelem: a Critical Text and Translation.* (Ottawa: The Institute of medieval Music, 1999), p. 405, ll 1-9.

⁵ This lead Guido to call singers "*super omnes homines fatui*" – the most foolish of men.

palm strives in vain for music.”⁶ The duplum text of a fourteenth-century English motet praises Guido as the *fons inicia* – the font and origin – of the division of musical space.⁷ And, as Bruce Holsinger and Francis Lee Utley have noted in detail, the young pupil of the *Choristers’ Lament*, an alliterative poem related to the *Piers Plowman* tradition, uses Guidonian nomenclature even as he bemoans his lack of musical literacy: “the song of the *cesolfa* does my syken sare,” he cries.⁸ These examples serve as a reminder that music is never far from the body, and the translation of music into language always returns back to the flesh, to physical inscription, and to the pedagogic tension between *Studie* (what can be learned through reading) and *Clergie* (what must be learned through practice): In the middle of the palm of this hand, the command, “*Disse, puer, disse!*”⁹

⁶ *Cartula de cantu plano*. Barcelona, Biblioteca de Catalunya, M. 883, fol. 70v-71v. See Gumpel, Karl-Werner, Ed. “Gregorianisches Gesang und Musica ficta: Bemerkungen zur spanischen Musiklehre des 15. Jahrhunderts,” *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 47 (1990): 144-7.

⁷ The “*Sub Arturo plebs vallata*” is a musician’s motet, a referential piece of music that names musicians and authors important for the history of music. “*Doctrina Gregorii / gesta Dei filii / canit omnis ordo; / Guido fons inicia / lineas et spacia / dedit monocordo; / sed Franco theorice / dat mensuram musice / quam colores ligant*” (Harrison, Frank Ll. *Musicorum Collegio: Fourteenth-century Musicians’ Motets*. Monaco: Editions de L’Oiseau-Lyre, 1986).

⁸ *Bequarre*, *bemol*, *solfe*, and *fa* are also terms used in the poem that refer directly back to Guido’s *Regule rithimice* and *Prologus in antiphonarium*. See Utley, Francis, “The Choristers Lament,” *Speculum*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (April 1946), pp. 194-202. 196.

⁹ The text may very well be taken from the 14th-century pseudo-Boethian poem also found in Breslau MS Universitätsbibliothek I.F.135, fol. 75. “*Disce puer disce uirtutum que via prisce / Que bona sunt disce. sed que mala sunt resipisce. / Si bene sis natus. Vel si bene morigeratus. / Pluribus es gratus si sis puer hijs sociatus. / Si sit Aristotilis subtilis littera vilis / Vel si platonis, saltem lege dicta Katonis. / Si non legista, si non potes esse sophista, / Disce garrere. si non poteris bene scire / Artis opus mire. te non sinit ergo perire / Scribere. dictare, si noscis, metra parare.*” At any rate, this command seems to imply acquisition of literacy as simultaneous with musical literacy (Peiper, Rudolf. “Beiträge zur Lateinischen Cato-Litteratur.” Dr. Ernst Höpfner and Dr. Julius Zacher, Eds. *Zeitschrift für Deutsche Philologie*, vol. 5. Halle: Verlag Der Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses, 1874. pp. 165-186), p. 169.

“Learn, boy, learn!” is not only the incipit of a didactic hexametric poem, it is the lyric of a hexachordal vocalise. In musical practice, literacy never totally overwrites orality, and the function of the body remains vital.¹⁰

It is not my intention to recapitulate the scholarly work on the Foucaultian, jurisprudential, or queer nature of embodiment and musical instruction in this introduction, nor to linger too long on the difference between musical knowledge acquired through reading and the practical capability attained through vocal performance. Instead, this dissertation looks into an aspect of music that has slipped through the margins of critique, particularly in relation to its effects on religious practice in the late medieval period. At the bottom of the Guidonian palm, beneath the *Disse*, *puer*, are the *IHS* – *In hoc signo* – of the Church Militant, but also *IHS* of *ihesus*, of Christ clothed and outlined with the human form, the *ihesu* of devotional cries and affective piety. Medieval music is about incarnations; but there is more than that in the Boethian and Guidonian incarnation of music. *Outside* of the body, of the hand, are two Greek letters: these are Α (alpha) and Ω (omega) – the beginning and the end – of time,

¹⁰ For instance, when Ymaginatif tells Will in Passus XII of the B-text of *Piers Plowman* that

Clergie and kynde wit cometh of sighte and techyng,
As the Book bereth witnesse to burnes that kan rede:
Quod scimus loquimur, quod vidimus testamur,

an integral component of the educational and communicative *imago* emerges. While mental images synthesize knowledge into *kynde wit*, it is the act of vocalization that performs *clergie*, or learned speech and the transmission of knowledge. Without the voicing of the text, allegory would remain, as Quintilian states, a *mutum illam effigiem*. In musical expression, allegorical *figura* attain the ability to construct society; in song, memorial frameworks are cast out of the mind and into the performative space. See Langland, William. *Piers Plowman*, Ed. A.V.C. Schmidt. (London: J.M. Dent, 1995). B.XII.64-65a; Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*. Ed. and Trans. Harold Edgeworth Butler. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1921), VI.i.32.

of space – those symbols for Jesus not as a human, but rather as a deity which stands outside of the musical space of the *gamut*, beyond the boundaries of the body, and in the eschatological atemporality of the Church Triumphant. This hand suggests that the medieval world implicitly understood more types of music than Boethius accommodated in his *De Musica*, more types of music than those which existed in the material world. What does music sound like here, without the body?

It is in answering this question that thirteenth and fourteenth century theology, mysticism, and musicology become important, and here where this dissertation begins. In the early fourteenth century, Jacobus Leodiensis (d. ca. 1340) penned the *Speculum Musicae*, a massive treatise on the state of music as it was understood in his day.¹¹ In his text we find the usual Boethian division of music into *musica mundana*, *musica humana*, and *musica instrumentalis*. But Jacobus makes an addition:

There is one final type of music and this is related to the others, which is called heavenly or divine music (*musica celestis*). This act is intuited through the motion of sensible matter, but is separated from it according to being and according to the intellect, and is made of transcendent things and touches on metaphysical things or on divine science.¹²

In a treatise that runs through seven volumes, Jacobus' little addition to Boethius' *De musica* could be easy to overlook, but it is revolutionary. Here, Jacobus suggests that

¹¹ Desmond, Karen. "New Light on Jacobus, Author of *Speculum Musicae*." *Plainsong and medieval Music*, Vol. 9, Issue 1 (April 2000, 19-40).

¹² *Potest autem et alia musicae species, ut videtur, his adiungi, quae coelestis vel divina dici potest. Haec res intuetur a motu et sensibili materia separatas et secundum esse et secundum intellectum, res scilicet transcendentis ad metaphysicam vel divinam scientiam pertinentes.* Jacobus says that he has found evidence of this music in a book called the *Musicae Commendatione*, which may refer to Louis of Toulouse's *Liber de Musicae Commendatione*, but it is just as likely to refer to some lost musicological treatise, or to be a fiction. See Jacobus Leodiensis, *Speculum musicae*, Ed. Roger Bragard. *Corpus Scriptorum de Musica*, vol. 3/1 (Rome: American Institute of Musicology, 1955), I.X, p. 37.

motion need not affect physical bodies in order to be musical. In fact, he posits that the most rarified, perfect type of music is not observed in physical matter at all, but instead operates in an analogous way to matter, in the movement of the intellect. This type of music exists within the resonant space of transcendent things, metaphysical things, and purely intellectual beings: angelic minds.

Angels, it must be noted, were a subject of quite a bit of controversy within philosophical discourse of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and their identity as “separate substances” – forms without physical bodies – meant that their “music” was inherently different from any other type previously theorized.¹³ medieval theology, broadly speaking, believed that angels were incorporeal, creatures of intellect rather than body, a dogma whose roots dated back to the Church Fathers. Augustine, for instance,

¹³ Pseudo-Dionysius’ hierarchy and his hierophanic Platonizing understanding of angelic organization appear throughout medieval mysticism. For instance, Richard Rolle’s *Ego dormio* lists the nine orders of angels according to this taxonomy. But Pseudo-Dionysius was not the only text that the late medieval period looked to in order to understand angels. A spate of other treatises written in the 12th and 13th centuries were dedicated, at least in part, to solving the problem of angelic nature and communication. Abelard’s *Sic et Non*, questions 41-50, concern the angels; Aquinas’ treatise *On Separate Substances* is devoted to angelic being, knowledge, and communication. Peter Lombard’s *Sententiae*, Bk II, *distinctiones* 3 and 8 served as both a textbook for theology students and a touchstone for angelologic debate. Famous names of the High medieval, as well as lesser lights, chimed in: Alexander of Hales, Albertus Magnus, Bonaventure, Duns Scotus, William of Ockham, Walter Chatton, Peter Auriol, Richard of Middleton, Durandus of St-Pourcain, and Hervaeus Natalis, among many others; even theologians of the 15th and early 16th centuries have surviving commentaries: Jean Gerson and Martin Luther both completed commentaries on the *Sententiae*, as was *de rigueur* for anyone pursuing a doctorate in the theology in the medieval schools. The other primary text for knowledge of angels was Aquinas’ *Summa Theologica*, which devoted two major sections to angelic being. The first, Part I, questions 50- 64, dealt with angels in and of themselves. The second, Part I, questions 105-114, described the ways in which angels interacted with each other and with man. The logic of the first dictated the reasonableness of the second. See Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Theologiae: Latin Text and English Translation, Introductions, Notes, Appendices, and Glossaries* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964). Hereafter *ST*.

noted that “angels [...] do not have bodies that can be felt.”¹⁴ But it was not as simple as this, as debates about angelic substance, knowledge, communication, and individuality in this period make clear.¹⁵ Even Aquinas changed his mind about exactly how angels worked, sang, and subsisted, eventually deciding that they were, indeed, separate from the physical realm. “There must be some incorporeal creatures,” he says,

for what is principally intended by God in creatures is good, and this consists in assimilation to God Himself. And the perfect assimilation of

¹⁴ Quoted in Byrne, James Steven. “Angels and the Physics of Place in the Early Fourteenth Century.” *Conversations with Angels: Essays Towards a History of Spiritual Communication, 1100-1700*. Ed Joad Raymond (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), p. 52.

¹⁵ Aquinas’ philosophy requires the world to be replete with beings at every level of creation; a complete universe, therefore, will include created beings that, transcending the material, have intellectual bodies instead. These bodies are, in comparison with God, “material and corporeal,” but are not material or corporeal in any human sense of the word. These beings, like any created being, are necessarily *potential* beings as well, in some way falling short of complete perfection, total essence, and therefore perfect actuality (a characteristic that only God has). It is this potential that allows humans to have some sort of knowledge of the angels; they, too, manifest themselves as created beings, and are not reducible to the singularity of divine *esse*. See Lescoe, F. J, Ed. *Saint Thomas Aquinas’s Treatise on Separate Substances* (West Hartford Connecticut: St Joseph’s college, 1963) as well as Kainz, Howard P. *Active and Passive Potency in Thomistic Angelology*. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1972), p. 30. The major scholastic texts that deal with angelic speech are listed here, though I do not have time to go into all of them at length: Bonaventure: *In Sent II*. d.10, a.3, p. 269-76, *Commentarius in secundum librum Sententiarum* (Quaracchi, 1938); Aquinas: *In Sent II*. d.11, q.2 a.3, *Quaest. disp. de ver.* q.9; *Summa theol.* I, q. 107, *Scriptum super librum Sententiarum* (1929-47), *Quaestiones* (1972-4), *Summa theologiae* (1952-61); Henry of Ghent: *Quodl.* V., q.15, *Quodlibeta* (1518); Giles of Rome: *De cogn. angel.* q. 12-13, *De esse et essentia, de mensura angelorum, et de cognitione angelorum* (1503); Richard of Middleton: *In Sent II*. d.9,a.1,q.1, *Super quatuor libros Sententiarum* (1591); Durandus of Saint-Pourcain: *In Sent.* II, d.11, q.2, in *Petri Lombardi Sententias theologica commentariorum libri IV* (1571); Scotus: *Ord.* II.d.9.q.2, *Lect II*, d.9, q.2; *Rep.Par.* II, d.9. q.2, *Liber II Sententiarum* (Quaracchi, 1914), *Lectura in librum secundum Sententiarum*, *Opera Omnia* vol. XIX (1993), *Reportata Parisiensis, Opera omnia*, vols XXII-XXIV (1894); Herveus Natalis: *In Sent II*.d.11.q.a.1, in *quatuor libros Sententiarum commentarius* (1647); William of Ockham: *In Sent.* II, 1. 16; *Quaest var* q.6, a.1; *Quodl.* I, q.6, *Quaestiones* (1981), 1984, 1980. *ST*, I.50.1; John Damascene in *De Fide Orth.ii*; Ambrose, *De Spir. Sanct.i*, 7.

an effect to a cause is accomplished when the effect imitates the cause [...] Now God produces the creature by his intellect and will. Hence the perfection of the universe requires that there should be intellectual creatures.¹⁶

If this is the case, however, how could angels sing? Music, after all, is about material bodies. And yet angels, lacking these material bodies, still made music, as Scripture and devotional literature of angelic visitations illustrates.¹⁷ There was a fundamental contradiction between the existence of angelic song and its logical basis; it was this crux that Jacobus Leodiensis attempted to solve through his addition of *musica celestis* – with its resonance of *intellectual* bodies – to the extant Boethian musical taxonomy.

Moreover, human beings claimed to have heard angelic music despite the fact that some medieval theories of knowledge believed this sort of interspecies communication to be impossible. If angels could sing, how did this music have any relationship with or effect on humans? How, for instance, did Richard Rolle, enraptured in the heights of divine love, hear angelic song, and with what sort of ears? How did humans hear *musica*

¹⁶ ST. I.50.1.

¹⁷ Isaiah 6:3, Revelation 5:11, and 7:11, and Zacharia 1:12 are a few examples of angelic visitation in the Bible; late medieval popular and devotional literature is awash with angels interacting directly with the world. In addition to the tales in the *Legenda Aurea*, Caesarius of Heisterbach's *Dialogus miraculorum* includes a tale in which an angel carries the transubstantiated host up to heaven after it rolls out of the hands of a careless priest; Johannes Herolt's *Miracles of the Virgin Mary* depicts two angels battling against demons for the soul of a man, Jacques de Vitry tells the story of an angel who appears in a dream to warn a young girl against imitating her mother's wicked life. Add to this the angelic visitations of Mechthild von Hackeborn, Mechthild von Magdeburg, Marguerite Porete, Bridget of Sweden, Hildegard von Bingen, Elisabeth von Schönau, Heinrich Suso, and others, and the medieval landscape is totally replete with angelic-human interfacing. See the *Vulgate New Testament with the Douay Version of 1582 in Parallel Columns* (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1872). All Biblical references are to this version.

celestis?¹⁸ What did *musica celestis* sound like? And, perhaps most importantly of all, to what extent was the late medieval mystic, *cantor*, *musicus*, or *lector* aware of the philosophical debates behind angelic song, and the inherent logical contradiction inherent in this form of divine participation?

The answers to these questions are, of course, dependent on the training or textual community each writer aligned him or herself with, whether that was the university, a monastic library, or vernacular devotional literature. This dissertation charts four textual communities concerned with heavenly song, mapping the ways in which claims to have heard the songs of angels – and subsequent attempts to write about it – could be appropriated, approved, or misunderstood. Whether the fourteenth-century writers addressed in this dissertation knew their scholastic philosophy or not, they were joining in the debate about *musica celestis*, and with it, an investigation of the capacity of the human mind to communicate beyond the physical body.

When discussing mystical song in late medieval England, one must begin with Richard Rolle (d. ca. 1349), one of the most popular authors of the English Middle Ages, and perhaps its most polarizing figure.¹⁹ Rolle is best known for his mystical experience of God, which took the form of heat (*fervor* or *calor*), sweetness (*dulcor*), and song

¹⁸ Stephens, Walter. “Strategies of interspecies Communication, 1100-1200.” *Conversations with Angels: Essays Towards a History of Spiritual Communication: 1100-1700*. Ed Joad Raymond. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 25-48.

¹⁹ More manuscripts written by Rolle exist than from any other English author in the 14th and 15th centuries, including Geoffrey Chaucer and William Langland.

(*canor*), which he says was “slike a song as of angels.”²⁰ What was the angelic song that Rolle experienced, and how did he write about it?

The general account in scholarship is that Rolle privileged *affectus* over *intellectus*, saying that his spirituality and relationship to *canor* is experiential rather than philosophical. Katherine Zieman’s reading is typical:

Rolle’s implicit privileging of affect over intellectual and even grammatical understanding led later writers to cautious revisions of his work, yet for that very reason, his legacy demonstrates the power of affectivity for his contemporary audience.²¹

Zieman argues that Rolle was more attuned to the phatic, illocutionary nature of song, subordinating grammatical meaning to affective desire, a tendency that led to a dangerous unmooring from linguistic or discursive meaning that later authors, like Walter Hilton, sought to tame.²² She is not alone in this assessment. Robert Boenig describes Rolle’s spirituality as affective rather than philosophical, as literal rather than metaphorical, a habit filled his *canor* with lasciviousness and danger in exactly the ways that medieval theology feared.²³ Nicholas Watson notes that Rollean *canor* was particularly closely related to affect: while Rolle had Victorine or Bonaventuran source-texts for two of his three modes of experiencing God (*fervor* and *dulcor*), *canor* was his own creation. Here,

²⁰ Rolle, Richard. *The Fire of Love and the Mending of Life or the Rule of Living*, Tr. Richard Misyn. (London: EETS, 1896), p. 72. *Qualis angelorum, talis est iscius concentus, etsi non tantus, nec tam perspicuus, propter carnem corruptibilem que adhuc aggrauat amantem : qui hoc experitur eciam angelica cantica expertus est cum eiusdem speciei : in uia est, et in patria* (Deansely, p. 237).

²¹ Zieman, Katherine. “The Perils of *Canor*: Mystical Authority, Alliteration, and Extragrammatical Meaning in Rolle, the *Cloud*-Author, and Hilton,” *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, no. 22 (2008) : 133-66, p. 137.

²² Ibid, p. 150.

²³ Boenig, Robert. “St Augustine’s *Jubilus* and Richard Rolle’s *Canor*.” *Vox Mystica: Essays in Honor of Valerie M. Lagorio* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1995), pp. 75-86.

says Watson, Rolle “passes beyond the traditional language of affective spirituality on to ground[...] where his own life is by far his most significant source.”²⁴ In writing about *canor*, Rolle was writing his spiritual autobiography and making a claim for himself as an author.²⁵

The accepted Rollean corpus runs to over thirty treatises and at least fifteen verse compositions, including everything from Latin Scripture commentaries to vernacular devotional epistles; it is thus virtually impossible to touch on all of Rolle’s writing as if it were part of one coherent intellectual or religio-political project. In addition to this, Rolle frequently referred to his experience of *canor* as ineffable: beyond language, and beyond description. These problems leave the reader in a bit of a bind: the most important element of Rollean spirituality is at some level impossible to talk about, even if his wide-ranging written corpus could be tamed. Throughout his work, however, one thing is constant: when Rolle speaks of the apex of mystical experience – *canor* – he is acutely aware of form, style, and of capturing the spirit of *musica celestis* despite its ineffability, often relying on techniques such as alliteration, ecstatic outbursts, alliteration, polyptoton, syntactical antithesis, and metaphorization to heighten the language beyond normal prosody. What the reader is able to do is get an impression of Rolle’s techniques of writing *around* his experience of *canor* – how expression of heavenly song might slip through the cracks of language, taking on different forms depending on the genre or the

²⁴ Watson, Nicholas. *Richard Rolle and the Invention of Authority*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 66. In Watson’s estimation, Rolle’s *canor* is angelic song, contemplation, a form of preaching, and verbal expression of his authority to preach. Watson has noted that the autobiographical tone that saturates Rolle’s work separates it from its closest formulaic model, Bonaventuran spirituality.

²⁵ For a more thorough treatment of the role of the *vita* in Rollean Langlandianism, see below, Chapter Three.

audience of any particular treatise. In the following pages, I will set out a short overview of Rolle's major works within the context of his career before moving on to an outline of the chapters of this dissertation, which deal primarily with reactions to Rolle's understanding of angelic song.²⁶

Musica Celestis* and Richard Rolle's *Canor

Rolle's career as a writer can be broadly sketched as one of experimentation with formal variation, and, indeed of this variation as a symptom of mystical experience. Rolle's early works, which include most of his Biblical commentaries along with his *Judica Me Deus*, lack the extreme alliteration and emotion of his later writing, and are not particularly interested in *canor*, either.²⁷ The *Canticum Amoris*, however, is an early work that stands out from the rest in terms of its style and its focus on song.²⁸ Take, for instance, its poem to the Virgin, which is almost erotic in its affective dimension:

*Erecta supercilia fulgent floris florum.
Ut rosa rubent labia; os ualde decorum.
Preclari sunt oculi, perpleni amorum.
Hiis gaudent iuuenculi a loris dolorum.*²⁹

This is typical Rollean poetic Latin, incorporating alliteration with a mantra-like rhyme and a lilting rhythm, "the most insistently alliterated ever written," Gabriel Liegey

²⁶ I am taking Nicholas Watson as the authority on the chronology on Rolle's works. See Watson, Nicholas. *Richard Rolle and the Invention of Authority* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 1992),

²⁷ Ibid, p. 96. Watson does, however, call Rolle's *Commentary on the English Psalter*, a later work, one of the first such in the vernacular, as masterful, saying that each psalm is represented as "the outpouring of a single voice and as having a coherent subject" (246).

²⁸ Watson describes the writing of *Canticum Amoris* as a 'high style of epic elaboration.' Ibid, p. 108.

²⁹ Liegey, Gabriel M. *The Canticum Amoris of Richard Rolle* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1956), p. 379.

accuses, “but also of the most complete subjection of the learned tongue to the principles of contemporary verse.”³⁰ In this first attempt at encapsulating song in poetry, Rolle is already formulating the mixture of song, heat, and sweetness that will be part of his writing for the rest of his career:

*Tantum pulcritudinem presto sum placare,
Melique dulcedinem uel guttam gustare.
Dignare, dulcissima, quod dilexi dare.
Est, quo ardet anima, amenum amare.
[...]
Odas habet organum admixtas amori,
Suaue psalterium concentus canori.
Dignum est dulcisonum deducens decori
Melos et mirificum, in quo mutor mori.*³¹

Although each of Rolle’s poems – which he seems to have written throughout his career – has an unique theme, his poetry retains certain formal characteristics from his early career into his later work: long lines and alliteration.³² Unlike Rolle’s prose works, the words “song” and “melody” are almost completely absent from this body of work, as if performance of song itself were sufficient. There are a handful of exceptions: the penultimate verse of *A Song of Mercy* mentions music explicitly, but it is not spiritual so much as an activity the writer reserves for heaven. “God of al, Lorde and Keyng, I pray

³⁰ Liegey, *Canticum Amoris*, p. 387.

³¹ Ibid, pp. 388, 390.

³² These are MSS Cambridge Dd. v.64.III and Longleat 29, whose lyrics are dedicated to Margaret Kirkeby, the same nun to receive the instruction of the *English Psalter* and *Ego Dormio*. Rolle’s stand-alone lyrics include *These are Exhortation*, *A Song of Mercy*, *A song of Love-longing to Jesus*, *A Song of the Love of Jesus*, *A Salutation to Jesus*, *The Nature of Love*, *Thy Joy Be in the Love of Jesus*, and the short semi-poem *Gastly Gladnesse*. See Allen, Hope Emily, Ed. *Writings Attributed to Richard Rolle*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1927).

the, Jhesu, be my frende, / Sa that I may thi mercy synge in thi blys withowten ende.”³³

This is not the all-encompassing mystical *canor* that Rolle describes in his prose, but is instead a reciprocal reaction to God’s act of merciful salvation: the mystic sings as an offering to God for his gift of grace.

In *A Song of Love-Longing to Jesus*, *canor* is synonymous with the languor of love – *amore langueo* – or the heart’s perceived distance from Christ:

My sang es in syghyng, whil I dwel in this way.
My lyfe es in langyng, that byndes me, nyght and day,
Til I come til my kyng, that I won with hym may,
And se his fayre schynyng, and lyfe that lastes ay.³⁴

Here, love and yearning create the musical tension between the soul and the body. Still, without a devotional pedagogy in which to place these lyrics, their performance of *canor* is incomplete, impossible to access through the act of reading.

More fulfilling in terms of Rolle’s description of *canor* are two of his most popular mid-life Latin treatises. These are the *Super Aliquos Versus Canticum Canticorum* and the *Incendium Amoris*.³⁵ The latter was popular in Latin, and later translated into English by Richard Misyn in the 1430s. Rolle’s *Super Aliquos Versus Canticum Canticorum* is a commentary on the first two and a half verses of the Song of Songs. And yet, despite being a commentary like his earlier, less formally interesting

³³ Allen, Hope Emily, Ed. *Writings Attributed to Richard Rolle*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1927, p. 40.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 42. Rolle would use pieces of this poem to create the poem inserted into his *Ego Dormio*.

³⁵ Watson refers to these works from Rolle’s middle years as indicative of his early attempts at expressing *canor* in verbal form. “Not only are assertion and eloquence prominent in discussions of *canor* in [these] works,” Watson says, “they are characteristic of *canor* itself[...] suggest[ing] an intention to imitate the experience of *canor*.” See Watson, Nicholas. *Richard Rolle and the Invention of Authority* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 1992), p. 179.

works, the imagery and the structure of the writing in this shorter piece set it apart from his other glosses. It is more forceful, more driven, and more in line with Rolle's stand-alone devotional treatises than with the commentary tradition. In the *Super Canticum*, Rolle describes the spiritual environment of the enraptured soul:

You have made my heart drunk, and I feel nothing except joy. You appear to me often, and when I am taken up into Heaven I am enclosed by a ubiquitous melody. You have entered into me so that that which I am is sweetness, burning, and song, and this is not of myself, but from you, my God. Therefore, when I sing now, it is a song of love.³⁶

This *canor* is the result of a heart drunken with the joy of God's love. Here, Rolle describes *canor* as a gift from God that supersedes or replaces individual desire, pulling the mystic into heaven and a melodious enclosure; the whole aural space of mystical revelation is filled with heavenly song. In this way, the *Super Canticum* is not so much a treatise on Solomon's book of erotic religious poetry as it is a type of hyperembodied *musica celestis*, a song that fills the ears of the faithful so completely that they are incapable of hearing anything else.³⁷

³⁶ Boenig, Robert. *Biblical Commentaries: Short Expositions of Psalm 20, Treatise on the Twentieth Psalm, Comment on the First Verses of the Canticle of Canticles, Commentary on the Apocalypse* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1984), p. 141. The Latin text for this is available in Elizabeth Murray's dissertation "Richard Rolle's *Commentary on the Canticles* Edited from MS Trinity College, Dublin, 153." (New York: Fordham University, 1958).

³⁷ Interestingly enough, the Latin style of these mid-career works is looser than his early lyrics, and *less* determined. In the *Super Canticum*, Rolle is experimenting in a voice, that exercises a more personal style while remaining rhythmic, chantlike and ultimately still very musical. Rollean diction, the thrust of the whole treatise is to "move ahead, typically with [a motion] analogous to the incremental repetition of the ballad." In the earlier *Canticum Amoris* and the other collected lyrics Rolle attempts to force mystical *canor* – a song that ought to be a spontaneous outpouring of the spirit or a gift bestowed on the mystic by God himself – into the artificial metrical container of poetic structure. See Schneider, J P. *The Prose Style of Richard Rolle of Hampole with Special Reference to its Euphuistic Tendencies*. (Baltimore: J H Furst, 1906), p. 51.

The hyperembodiment of *canor* is shown in an even more marked way in Rolle's *Incendium Amoris*, a pseudo-autobiographical mystical treatise which builds its musical pedagogy upon the musical claims of the *Super Canticum*. Rolle does not build his mystical diary around a chronological life-story; instead, each chapter guides the reader closer to the experiential attainment of spiritual *canor*. Biography and narrative are disarticulated for the purposes of pastoral care. In this broken narrative, song itself plays a major role in providing formal structure, drawing the mystical reader towards the apex of spiritual experience, which is expressed in the formal terms of alliteration and rhythmic prose. "I satte," says Rolle

In a chappell and qwhilst with swetnes of prayer or meditacion mikyll I was delityd, sodanly in me I felt a mery heet and vnknawen. [...] that heet treuly sensibily swete smellynge vnhopingly, I was besy vnto the inscheddyng and takynge of heuenly sounde or gostly, the whilk to songis longis of louynge euerlastynge and swetnes of melody vnsene—for knawen or harde may itt not be bot of hyme that it takys; whome behouys clene to be and fro the erth departyd—half a 3ere, thre monethis and sum wekys ar our-ryn. Whils treuly in the same chappell I satt, and in the ny3t before sopar als I myght salmys I songe, als wer the noyes of redars or rather singars abowen me I beheld. Qwhilst also prayand to heuyns with all desire I toke hede, on what maner I wote not sodanly in me noys of songe I felt, and likyngest melody heuynly I toke, with me dwellyng in mynde. Forsoth my thoyt continuly to myrth of songe was chaungyd, end als wer loueynge I had thinkand, and in prayers and psalmys sayand the same sounde I scheuyd, and so forth to synge that before I sayd for plente of inward swetnes I bryst oute, forsoth priuely, for allonly befor my makar.³⁸

³⁸ Rolle, Richard. *The fire of love, and The mending of life; or, The rule of living. The first Englisht in 1435, from the De incendio amoris, the second in 1434, from the De emendacione vitæ of Richard Rolle, hermit of Hampole, by Richard Misyn, bachelor of theology*. Ed. Richard Harvey. (London: EETS, 1896), p. 36. "*Sedebam quippe in quadam capella, et dum suauitate oracionis uel meditacionis multum delectarer, subito sentiui in me ardorem insolitum et iocundum [...] Flagrante autem sensibiliter calore illo inestimabiliter suauis usque ad infusionem et percepcionem soni celestis uel spiritualis, qui ad canticum pertinet laudis eterne et suauitatem inuisibilis melodic, que sciri et audiri non potest nisi ab eo qui accipit, quern oportet esse mundatum et*

In Rolle's original Latin, the recurring alliteration with *canor* (*capella, calore, canticum, cenam, canencium, cumque* and so forth) highlights the importance of song within the poetics of prose. Misyn's English translation does not attempt to mimic this style, but instead arrives at the feeling of intensity through a long build up of similarly constructed clauses culminating in the "brysting oute" of "inward swetnes;" the protracted sentence hangs in tension until language itself "'bryst[s] oute." And, when Rolle is caught up in the heights of melody, heavenly music supersedes his own singing of the Psalms, leaving him outwardly silent.³⁹ Rolle depicts himself as having the song impressed upon him; he does not invite heavenly melody to come. Rather than force the experience of *canor* into metrical lines, Rolle allows the poetry of his prose to blur the reading experience into a sort of subconscious performance of song. Gone are the jangling rhymes of the *Canticum Amoris*; in its place are subtle cadences of a prose that gently approaches an alliterative experience of *canor*.

Rolle's later works combine this carefully wrought prose with ecstatic poetry into a prosopoetics that is his most complete expression of *canor*. This mixed style includes

segregatum a terra, dimidius annus et tres menses et aliquot ebdomade effluxerunt. Dum enim in eadem capella sederem, et in nocte ante cenam psalmos prout potui decanterem, quasi tinnitum psallencium uel potius canencium supra me ascoltaui. Cumque celestibus eciam orando toto desiderio intenderem, nescio quomodo mox in me concentum canorum sensi, et delectabilissimam armoniam celicus excepi, mecum manentem in mente. Nam cogitacio mea continuo in carmen canorum commutabatur, et quasi odas habui meditando, et eciam oracionibus ipsis et psalmodia eundum sonum edidi. Deinceps usque ad canendum que prius dixeram, pre affluencia suauitatis interne prorupi, occulte quidem, quia tantummodo coram Conditore meo." See Deansley, Margaret, Ed. *Incendium Amoris of Richard Rolle of Hampole*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1915), p. 189-90.

³⁹ These textual connections also highlight the importance of the moral qualities of the mystic in relation to their receptivity to spiritual song, a theme which will become apparent in the chapters to follow.

two of the best examples of Rolle's mystical project – two texts which will be vital for this dissertation – the English epistles *Ego Dormio* and the *Form of Living*. Both these works insert poetry into the heart of the prose text at climactic points, using prose to teach *canor*, and poetics to perform it.

The English *Ego Dormio* begins with a Latin quotation from the Canticles: “*Ego dormio et cor meum vigilat.*”⁴⁰ A gloss of the verse incorporating the Song of Songs follows: “In the songe of loue I fynd hit written that I haue set at the begennynge of my writynge: ‘I slepe and my hert waketh.’”⁴¹ It urges, as so many of Rolle's writings do, that the believer leave the vanity of the world behind:

Also sone as thi hert is touched with the swetnesse of heuyn, the wil litel luste the myrth of this world [...] For al the melody, al the richesse, al the delites that al the men of this world can ordeyne or thynke, semeth and is bot noy and angre to a mannes herte that verrailly is brennyng in the loue of God, for he hath mirth and melody and ioy in angels songe.⁴²

Rolle makes use of melody by applying it in oppositional spheres; he pits the world and heaven against each other. He had done this before in the *Incendium Amoris*, as heavenly song overtook his own psalm-singing; there, the world and angels both competed musically for the ears of the believer. Here, the stakes have been raised: not only does *canor* overtake physical music, it turns all of the world's noise into “noy and angre” so that the contemplative longs solely for the heavenly sort of music:

Thou make my soule clere, for loue that chaungeth chere.
How longe shal I be here? When may I cum the nere
Thi melody for to hire?
Of loue to hyre the songe that is lestyng so longe?

⁴⁰ *Canticum Canticorum*, 5:2.

⁴¹ Ogilvie-Thomson, S, Ed. *Richard Rolle, Prose and Verse* (London: EETS, 1988), p. 26.

⁴² *Ibid*, p. 27.

Wil thou be my louynge, that I thi loue may synge?⁴³

This portion of the text is characterized by irregular verse form, alliteration, and ecstatic themes and language. None of Rolle's poetic techniques here are new, and yet, when couched in didactic prose, the poetic lines draw the reader from receptive devotional reading into the ecstatic performance of *canor*. At its heart, this is what *Ego Dormio* is about: applying the terms of the contemplative life to the ecstasy that the mystic, wrapped in music, hears. The treatise does this by incorporating verse into its prose, and the lyric itself centers on mystical song.

The *Ego Dormio* ends with an expression of the heights of mystical experience:

My songe is in seghynge, my lif is in langygne,
Til I the se, my kynge, so faire in thi shynynge. [...]
Ihesu, my dere and my drery, delites art thou to synge;
Ihesu, my myrth, my melody, when wil thou cum, my kynge?
Ihesu, my hele and my hony, my quert, my confortynge,
Ihesu, I couait for to dey when hit is thi paynge.
Langynge is in me lent, that my loue hath me sent. [...]
Langynge is in me light, that byndeth me day and nyght,
Til I hit haue in sight, his face so fayere and bryght. [...]
And I thi loue shal synge throgh syght in thy shynynge
In heuyn withouten endynge.⁴⁴

This is an older poem incorporated from Rolle's *Lyrics*; here it is renewed and empowered within the rubric of contemplative prose.

The *Form of Living*, written for Margaret Kirkeby, was one of Rolle's final works. Another popular text, it exists in whole or part in almost 40 manuscripts, and, like the *Ego Dormio*, stresses the theme of the incompatibility of spiritual and physical song.

⁴³ Ibid, p. 31.

⁴⁴ Ibid, pp. 32-33

It winds into both its language and structure the liquescence of thought into melody.

When the fire of love begins burning in the Christian heart,

Than the sowl is Ihesu louynge, Ihesu thynkyng, Ihesu desyryng, only in
coueitys of hym ondyng, to hym seghyng, of hym brennyng, in hym
restyng. Than the songe of preisyng and of loue is comen. Than thi
thoght turneth in to songe and in to melody. Than the behoueth synge the
psalmes that thou before said; than thou mow be longe about fewe
psalmes. Than the wil thynke the deth swetter than hony, for than thou art
siker to see hym that thou louest. Than thou may hardily say “I
languysshe for loue”; Than may thou say “I sleep and my hert waketh.”⁴⁵

The language here flows from the instructional to the poetic and prayerful, and the
sentence structure grows even more mellifluous as the treatise continues, rising into verse
on the next page:

When wil thou cum to comfort me, and bryng me out of care,
And gyf me the, that I may se, hauynge for euermare? [...]
In welth beth or walkyng, withouten noy or nyght;
My loue is in lastyng, and longeth to that syght.⁴⁶

Although at their heart earthly song and heavenly *canor* may be mutually exclusive, there
is still reason for the contemplative to burst into actual jubilant song, for

that wondreful praisynge is in the soule, and for aboundance of ioy and
swetnesse hit ascendeth in to the mouth, so that the hert and the tongue
accordeth in one, and body and soule ioyeth in God lyuynge.⁴⁷

In the end of meditation, the lines between the body and the soul blur, and the mystic can
no longer distinguish between spiritual *canor* and actual singing.

Through these two late works – just as he speaks of the superiority of heavenly
melody in regards to mundane music, just as he attempts to piece together a mystical
tradition that does not rely on the verse forms of his earlier years – Rolle, like the

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 17.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 18.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 24-25.

contemplative for whom the “swetnesse” of praisynge “ascendith in to the mouth,” cannot help bursting into jubilant poetry. Here, as he did not do in his stand-alone poetic works, Rolle has given the poem a frame, he has given spiritual melody a means of opening into spiritual song, and vice versa. The inclusion of these poetic songs is Rolle’s way of establishing *musica celestis* despite its inaudibility. It manifests as formal.

Despite this focus on formal, textual shifts, however, Rolle never forgets that there is an actual body involved in the experience of *canor*. He makes this clear in the Latin *Melos Amoris*.⁴⁸

The true and burning lover of God wishes to be continually quiet in both mind and body, because it greatly troubles him to move around. The holy man is soothed by sitting still, and contemplatives occupy a resting sort of song. They sing the praise of this song, for a heart does not burn in quiet song if the body is fatigued.⁴⁹

Although literary devotional shifts are vital to the sonic effects of Rollean texts, Rolle as an author-figure is vitally concerned with the outer comportment of the body. He thus

⁴⁸ *The Commandment*, also from Rolle’s later career, is a shorter work and more sober in its instructive style. Still, its call to embrace silence and radiate charity is encased in a bricolage, a patchwork, of Rolle’s older material, giving the work a sense of referentiality that mimics the formal variety of his other English pieces. While Claire Elizabeth McIlroy says that it has a “lack of mystical content,” and both Hope Emily Allen and Nicholas Watson peg this as a dry didactic work that lacks the emotional connections of Rolle’s other texts, and also suggests that the lack of the “I” in this treatise makes it “less Rollean.” See McIlroy, Claire Elizabeth, *The English Prose Treatises of Richard Rolle*. (Cambridge, D.S. Brewer, 2004), p. 100. Also note the commitment to cleansing the corrupt will. Seems to be mainly focused on dulcor. The connection between clothing and hypocrisy. McIlroy notes a preoccupation with will that is schematically vital; the corrupt will shows his comprehensive understanding of affective responses.

⁴⁹ *Verus namque et ardens amator Dei quietem mentis et corporis continuam esse appetit, quia maxime tribulatur quando discurrit. Sessio solatur sanctos. Contemplativi capiunt canticum quiescentes, canorum gaudium gerunt; nam fatigato corpore cor iam in canore non calet quietum.* See Arnould, E. J. F., Ed. *The Melos Amoris of Richard Rolle of Hampole*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957), p. 12, ll 11-16.

combines literary style with embodied practice, a poet writing for the stage of contemplation.

How effective was this mode of affective writing, and what were the implications of *canor* that caused so much controversy over Rolle's writings in the centuries that followed?

As stated previously, Rolle was one of the most popular authors of the English Middle Ages. More manuscripts by him exist from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries than any other English author, including Geoffrey Chaucer.⁵⁰ His popularity may have stemmed from any number of things: he was a translator of the Psalms into English, a mystic who penned texts in Latin, and a spiritual caretaker who wrote intimate spiritual guides for women just starting out on their contemplative careers. In addition to this, a cult developed around him – primarily in Yorkshire – after his death, and although he was never canonized, this group of followers compiled an office in his honor, hoping that one day he might become a saint. The prologue to this votive office, the *Officium et Miracula*, stresses the importance of song:

The is the Office of Saint Richard, hermit, who will afterwards be canonized by the Church, but in the interim it is not allowed for his name to be sung in church during the canonical hours, or to solemnize his festival. And yet because he was a man who evidenced some great saintliness in his life, we may as for his judgment in our private prayers, and ask him to commend us to God.⁵¹

⁵⁰ See Hanna, Ralph. *The English Manuscripts of Richard Rolle: A Descriptive Catalogue*. (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2010).

⁵¹ *Officium de Sancto Ricardo heremita, postquam fuerit ab ecclesia canonizatus, quia, interim, non licet publice in ecclesia cantare de eo horas canonicas, vel solemnizare festum de ipso. Potest tamen homo euidenciam huius sue eximie sanctitatis et vite egregie enerari, et in orationibus priuatis eius suffragia petere, et se suis precibus commendare.* See Perry, George G, Ed. *English Prose Treatises of Richard Rolle of Hampole, edited from Robert Thornton's MS.* (London: EETS, 1866), p. xix.

The *Officium* was prepared in anticipation of Rolle's canonization, although the manuscript itself was written almost a hundred years after Rolle's death, attesting to the popularity of Rollean *canor* as late as the 1450s. Just as important for *canor*, or mystical song, the lines above also suggest that the liturgy, and Rollean devotion, might be sung *in orationibus priuatis*: in private prayers, or silent songs. By the 1400s, Rolle had become an underground saint with a national reading significance, a cult figure whose performed life was part of a quiet network of devotees, and an intercessor whose *canor* was reflected back at him in the form of silent prayer.

And yet, it is not to the cult of Richard Rolle, properly defined, that this dissertation will look in its analysis of *canor*. Most of the texts addressed in the following chapters, in fact, have never been mentioned as part of the Rollean devotional cult (except, perhaps, for Richard Methley's collected works). It is here, on the fringes of Rollean involvement, that one finds the most productive and problematic loci of *canor*'s influence in the Middle English and English medieval Latin corpus.

In all of the textual communities addressed in the following chapters, a set of common tensions arise. Each of these writers set out a serious investigation of *canor*, which is understood as private, and often at odds with liturgical performance; they show an interest in postures of devotion that grant *musica celestis* its mystical efficacy; and they delineate a concern about the level of embodiment expressed in devotional experience that is supposed to be beyond corporeality.⁵² And yet, *canor* or *musica*

⁵² One could say that taking on the mantle of mystical song is also to bridge the divide between *musicus* and *cantor*. In mystical experience, the contemplative eventually becomes a natural mouthpiece of the living God. In the diaries of monastic authors, text

celestis remains a difficult topic, addressed in different ways unique to each time, place, and community of composition.

Chapter 1

Negative Theology and Negative Critiques: Rolle's Detractors

The first chapter focuses on two authors who reacted negatively to Rolle's concept of angelic song: Walter Hilton (d. 1396) and the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing*, both of whom found his treatment of mystical song logically problematic at best and blasphemous at worst. Raising the same objections as philosophers like Aquinas and Ockham might have, they argued against Rolle's hyperembodied *canor*. Without bodies, they asked, how could preternatural beings influence physical human ears? Hilton and the *Cloud*-author denounced Rolle as a charlatan, but they nonetheless attempted to resolve the "problem" of mystical song and medieval music theory, suggesting alternate forms and sources for the ecstasy of *musica celestis* and how it might aid in the attainment of heaven.

Chapter 2

Liturgical Appropriations, Part 1: Carthusian Mystical Diaries

The second chapter focuses on Rolle's sympathetic readers, who actively sought to appropriate mystical song within liturgical devotional forms and the framework of

and apparatus work together in a mimetic production of ecstasy. Over years of singing and learning liturgical chant, the performer trains her body and her mind to operate with others in choral sonic production. See Bower, Calvin M. "The Transmission of ancient music theory into the Middle Ages," in *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 136-67.

orthodox religious practice. The two authors around which this chapter centers wrote mystical diaries: life-accounts that structured their experience of the world according to the immanent experience of the divine. Both were Carthusian monks: Richard Methley (d. 1527) and John Norton (d. 1521). Richard Methley's *Scola Amoris Languidi*, the *Dormitorium Dilecti Dilecti*, and the *Refectorium Salutis*, (*The School of the Languor of Love*, *The Dormitory of the Beloved of the Beloved*, and *The Refectory of Salvation*) have received almost no scholarly attention, and John Norton's *Musica monachorum*, *Thesaurus cordium vere amantium*, and *Devota lamentacio* (*The Music of Monks*, *The Treasure of True Lovers*, and *Devout Lamentation*) have never been addressed by modern critics. This dissertation marks the first scholarly attempt to bring Methley and Norton into discourse with each other and with the broader world of English mysticism, *canor*, and *musica celestis*.

Chapter 3

Liturgical Appropriations, Part 2: *Piers Plowman* and the Charity of *Musica Celestis*

The third chapter argues that William Langland's *Piers Plowman* – one of the masterworks of Middle English literature – structures its critique of the Christian community around the tension between *musica celestis* and liturgical performance. In other words, late medieval fiction, like late medieval devotion, felt a need to respond to the debates surrounding mystical song. In the act of doing so, literary discourse itself performed and embodied the debates and tensions endemic to *musica celestis*: tensions between self and other, subject and object, performance and materiality, and heaven and earth. *Piers Plowman* provides a poetic framework with which to understand the

metaphysics of music in literature. Not only is there a thematic relationship between *Piers Plowman* and mystical song, but there is also a connection between the poem and Richard Rolle specifically: the two authors' works appear together in a number of compilations from the late medieval period, sometimes materially interwoven in the context of the manuscript page.⁵³ To the extent that *Piers Plowman* is about the incorporated sounding of the *corpus mysticum* beyond the confines of the material body, it is a work of mysticism, and, as a mystical text, *Piers Plowman* refers and responds to Rolle as a mystic invested in musical experience of the divine.

Chapter 4

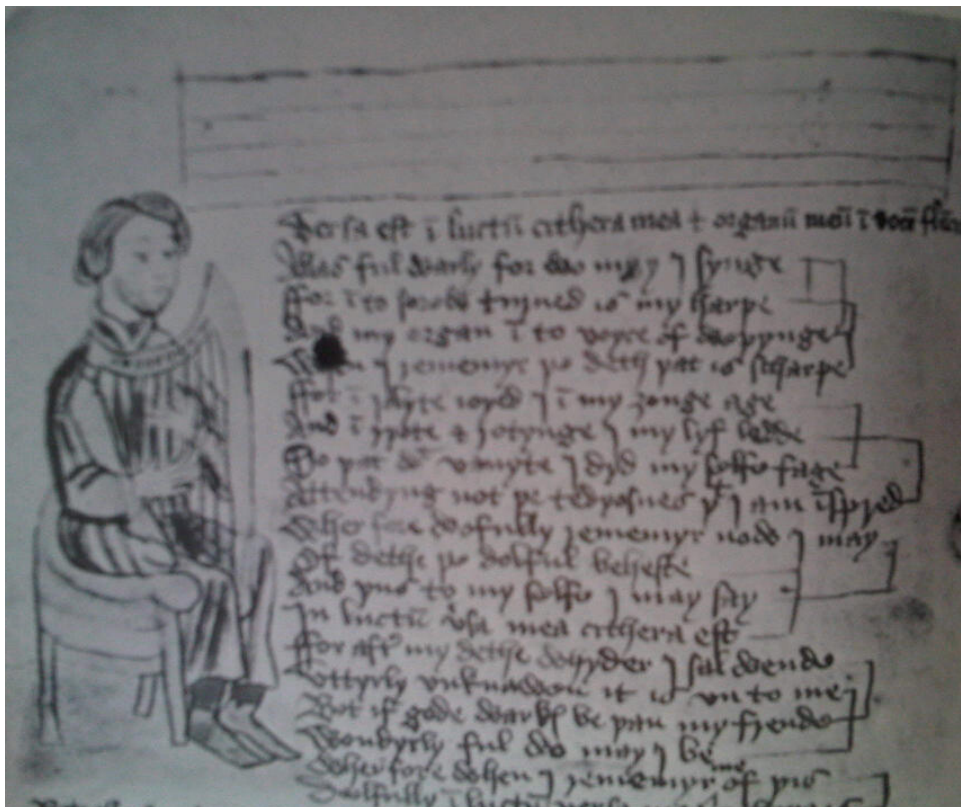
Liturgical Appropriations, Part 3: Syon Abbey, Performing Bodies, and English

Canor

The fourth chapter investigates manuscripts and printed texts from the Bridgettine monastery of Syon Abbey – one of the wealthiest and most prominent religious establishments in England – to illustrate the centrality of mystical song in late medieval English political theology. Syon's processions, liturgical manuscripts used during festivals and feast-day processions, receive their first full critical analysis in this chapter. The rules and ceremonies of the Nuns of Syon show an attentiveness to interior, private musical experience as well as to a liturgical performance that had national implications: Syon Abbey was a major site for pilgrims from its foundation in 1415 until Syon's dissolution in 1539. The women's performance influenced the way England thought of

⁵³ Although I will only touch on them briefly, these manuscripts are Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Eng. Poet. a.1., New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS 818, Cambridge, Trinity College MS B.15.17, and Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College MS 669.

itself as a corporate musical body. In addition to their liturgical texts, Syon's library owned nearly all of Richard Rolle's works; printed material published by Syon after 1485 shows an indebtedness to *musica celestis* in the context of the Christian nation, and makes the basis of chapter five. Syon's printed work – marketed to the lay reading audience of London as well as to its nuns – illustrates the dissemination of extraliturgical mystical song from a liturgical source, and enables the re-encoding of the aural and oral in the realm of private devotional reading. Through their liturgical performance and their written work, the Nuns of Syon produced an incorporated political subject concomitant with mystical song.



British Library Additional MS 37049 fol 84v

There is no one solution to the question prompted by the Guidonian hand at the beginning of this introduction – that is, what does music sound or look like, beyond the confines of the body? – but a 15th-century miscellany used in a Carthusian charterhouse, British Library Additional MS 37049, presents one potential answer.⁵⁴ Here is a blank stave of music, with the English lyric *Versa est in luctum cithera mea et organum meum in vocem flencium* (‘Allas ful warly for wo may I synge / For into sorow turned is my harpe’) which is sung by a young man or even, perhaps, a young Carthusian. The five-line blank stave indicates that this is not chant, but either polyphonic sacred or secular music; and yet the emptiness dictates silence, the renunciation of sound in the performance of contrite contemplation. This is a book which depicts a body, both quietly waiting, resonating with the spiritual longing for and receptivity of *musica celestis*.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ This manuscript has, of late, become popular in medieval criticism on devotion, private reading, and the performative role that image and text play in manuscriptal relationship with each other. This popularity is due in large part as a result of Jessica Brantley’s *Reading in the Wilderness* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007). Although the bulk of Add 37049 is comprised of *The Desert of Religion* – itself an English recension of William of Nassington’s *Speculum vitae* – it also contains a number of shorter lyrics and stories with small attendant drawings.

⁵⁵ The poem is an elaboration of Job 30:31: “Alas ful warly for wo may i synge / For into sorow turned is my harpe / And my organ in to voyce of wepyng / When i rememyr the deth that is scharpe.” See Ross, Thomas W. “Five Fifteenth-century ‘Emblem’ Verses from Brit. Mus. Addit. MS 37049.” *Speculum*, 32.2 (1957), pp. 274-82.

CHAPTER ONE

Negative Theology and Negative Critiques: Rolle's Detractors

Although there was never a formalized “Cult of Angels” along the lines of the Cult of the Holy Name or the Cult of the Virgin Mary in the late medieval period, devotional material frequently depicted angelic messengers as central to religious life. In vernacular and pastoral literature, specific angels were venerated: the angel Michael, who appears in Jacobus de Voragine’s *Legenda Aurea*, had a feast in his honor: Michelmas.⁵⁶ Gabriel developed a following due to his association with the Annunciation. By the end of the Middle Ages, Raphael, the angel of healing, also had a coterie of devotees.⁵⁷

In addition to this, a Prayer to the Guardian Angel was added to the liturgy in the thirteenth century, allowing a more formal orthodox relationship to develop between angels and humans who engaged in devotional practice targeted at these celestial beings.⁵⁸ Books of Hours from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries frequently depicted angelic messengers, and a number – though by no means a large collection – of these books for private devotion were dedicated specifically to Guardian Angels, with prayers

⁵⁶ Johnson, Richard F. *Saint Michael the Archangel in medieval English Legend*. (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2005). From the tenth century onwards, liturgical devotions to Michael were standardized along with the origins of his cult around the Monte Gregano legend.

⁵⁷ Edmund Lacy (d. 1455), bishop of Hereford and Exeter, who accompanied Henry V to Agincourt in 1415, instituted a feast in honor of Raphael in 1443. See Swanson, R. N. *Religion and Devotion in Europe, c.1215–c.1515*. Cambridge medieval Textbooks. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) and Marshall, Peter and Alexandra Walsham, Eds. *Angels in the Early Modern World*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 11.

⁵⁸ The Feast of the Guardian Angels was not added to the Catholic Church Year until 1608. See Keck, David. *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 163, as well as Marshall, Peter and Alexandra Walsham, eds. *Angels in the Early Modern World*. (Cambridge: CUP, 2006).

directed at these beings who interfaced between humanity and divinity.⁵⁹ The following prayer, from British Library, Royal MS 2 B XV, is typical of those found in these devotional texts; this prayer is both a description of angels and of their role in the lives of humans:

Oh Guardian Angel, who is committed to me because of your piety, save, defend, and guide me. O sweet angel who stays with me, even though it is not permitted for you to speak directly to me, you protect my body along with my spirit, for this is the duty to which you were assigned. O blessed angel and messenger of our God, rule my thoughts and actions and direct them to the most high God.⁶⁰

The Guardian angel is a congener, a messenger, between God and man; he is perfectly dutiful to both. Furthermore, the angel is invested in the human as a composition of thoughts (*cogitatus*) and actions (*actus*), of body (*corpus*) and soul (*anima*). The angel responds to the needs of the human as simultaneously material and spiritual, intimately attached to the complexity of form that comprises the human being. However, despite

⁵⁹ Aberdeen University Library, MS 25, for instance, was created for Elizabeth Woodville, Queen of Edward IV. This book has ties to Syon Abbey and the fraternity and hospital dedicated to the Virgin Mary and All Angels near Syon around 1446. A few other examples survive: Liverpool Cathedral, MS Radcliffe 6 was modelled after the Aberdeen manuscript; Jean Luyt commissioned Bodleian Library, MS Lat liturg.e.17, a northern English Sarum prayer- and office-book with substantial “angelic” material; and two Books of Hours made for Thomas Butler, the seventh earl of Ormond (d. 1515) – British Library, Royal MS 2 B XV and Harley MS 2887 – contain prayers to the Guardian Angel. See Sutton, Anne and Livia Visser-Fuchs. “The Cult of Angels in Late Fifteenth-Century England: An Hours of the Guardian Angel presented to Queen Elizabeth Woodville,” in *Women and the Book: Assessing the Visual Evidence*. Lesley Smith and Jane HM Taylor, Eds (London: The British Library and University of Toronto Press, 1996), pp. 230-65.

⁶⁰ British Library, Royal MS 2 B XV fol 66v: *Angele qui meus es custos pietate superna me tibi commissum: salva defende gubernas. O tu dulcis angele qui mecum moraris, licet personaliter mecum non loquaris. Animam cum corpore procor tuearis. Iam hoc est officium ad quod assignaris. O beate angele nunci dei nostri, cogitatus et actus meos regula: ad votum dei altissimi.*

this attachment, the angel is also radically detached: he is not permitted – by his own nature, or by God – to speak or interact directly with his human charge.

And yet, somehow, the angel is able to rule external behaviors and internal states of the human mind (*cogitatus et actus meos regula*). The miniature that accompanies this prayer depicts this functional contradiction:



Royal MS 2.B.XV, fol 66v

Here, a winged angel stands behind a Benedictine nun. His hand rests on her shoulder, but she does not note his embodied presence. Instead, the nun casts her gaze downward, to the written text of her book or perhaps to her own hands, which are clasped in prayer.

The intimacy depicted between the nun and her angel is a single instance of the proximity of humanity and divinity as the Middle Ages understood it. It is also an attempt to depict a theory of communication between angels and humans. First, by providing, depicting, and maintaining both the angel and the human with recognizable material bodies, this image highlights the importance of the physical form for human communication. However, as the image shows the nun bent over in prayer, ignoring the

embodied angel behind her, the text also suggests that human language and communication with heaven must deny the body in its dependence upon the intellect. Some forms of verbal, written, or mental prayer must exist to bridge the gap between the (spiritual) angel and the (physical) nun. Language, and specifically the language of devotion, must travel from the human mind to the angelic intellect.

In other words, late medieval lay devotion recognized that angels had bodies. It also took it as a matter of faith that angels acted on the human world. But the prayer and illustration in the Royal manuscript suggest that the nature of this interaction was unknown, or, at the very least, too difficult for the sort of lay theology that could be presented in a devotional text. After all, Books of Hours are not catechisms, nor are they commentaries; they instruct by example and command rather than arguing through syllogisms and logical sequelae. In the Royal manuscript, the angel protects those who pray, and those who pray do so because it is what they have been taught to do.

The example of the Guardian Angel and its interaction with the physical world presents the same problem that this chapter probes. How do humans interface with angels, and why is the devotional landscape of fourteenth-century English mysticism so concerned with angelic song in particular? How does angel-human and human-angel communication occur?

The way that these questions are answered is context-dependent: a book of vernacular devotion like *The Cloud of Unknowing* will approach the answer differently, for instance, than a Book of Hours; an introductory Latin theological text like Walter Hilton's *De imagine peccati* provides a different answer from that found in Richard Rolle's *Melos Amoris*. Subtending this is a real difference of opinion by some thinkers,

from Thomas Aquinas to William Ockham and Walter Hilton to Rolle himself.⁶¹ This chapter will address three authors critical to late medieval English mysticism and devotion with an eye to how angels and humans found ways of communicating. These are Richard Rolle, Walter Hilton, and the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing*.⁶²

Richard Rolle's expression of mystical experience through *canor* is nuanced, but his discursive memory of that experience seems largely untouched by contemporary philosophical discussions about angelic bodies or the philosophical or mathematical identity and operation of music. Perhaps "untouched" is the wrong way to describe Rolle's relationship to philosophies of angelic speech: Rolle himself explicitly claimed to reject it, calling philosophers effeminate and their methodology dangerous.⁶³ But this is also a type of fiction. Rolle may not have used the language of logic or theology to describe his experience of *canor*, but his commentary on angelic song shows that he understood angelic embodiment, language, and song as fundamentally important for an understanding of human embodiment, language, and song: the two, in Rolle's

⁶¹ This particular avenue of discussion is fruitful, but can only serve as an inspirational philosophical framework within this project. See *Angels in medieval Philosophical Inquiry: Their Function and Significance*. Iribarren, Isabel and Martin Lenz, Eds. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), especially Kobush, Theo. "The Language of Angels: On Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity of Pure Spirits." pp. 131-42; Perler, Dominik. "Thought Experiments: The Methodological Function of Angels in late medieval Epistemology." pp. 143-154; and Lenz, Martin. "Why Can't Angels Think Properly? Ockham against Chatton against Chatton and Aquinas." pp. 155-168.

⁶² The *Cloud*-author also wrote *Deonise Hid Divinity*, *A Pistle of Pryaer*, and a *A Letter of Discretion of Stirrings*, which will be touched on briefly; this chapter will focus primarily on the *Cloud* itself.

⁶³ *Abinde absumuntur opacitates hostilium operum et effugantur errores effimantorum, philosophorumque figmenta finem faciant inter fideles; omnes utique qui seipsos inhiant exaltari ultra alios in infimis abducantur, donec molles maculati in malis mutantur in melius ac mesticia miserorum mergatur in malignitatem mundanam.* See Arnould, E. J. F., Ed. *The Melos Amoris of Richard Rolle of Hampole*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957), p. 37.

understanding of psychology, were critically intertwined. While Rolle chose to reject scholasticism's discursive forms, he also assumed elements of its angelology into a literature of phatic expressivity and formal experimentation.

Hilton and the *Cloud*-author's negative critique of Rolle is often placed in terms of a fault line that runs between two strands of mysticism: the cataphatic, or positive descriptive articulation of divine experience (represented by Rolle) on the one hand, and the apophatic, or negative and fundamentally inarticulable nature of divinity (presented by Hilton and the *Cloud*) on the other. However, the division between positive and negative theology is triply problematic when discussing *musica celestis*. First, it is artificial, a back-formation applied by contemporary scholarship to all three writers and, while a useful heuristic, not universally accurate. Second, it suggests that the hyperembodiment presented by Rolle is a product of cataphatic mysticism, an implication that is generalizing at best (Hilton and the *Cloud*-author put forward their own versions of performative, embodied song, and Rolle sometimes engaged in mysticism that looks like negative theology). Third, it implies that when Rolle, Hilton, and the *Cloud*-author talk about bodies engaged in performative mystical experience they are referring to an agreed-upon meaning of both the terms "body" and of "linguistic performance," which is not the case.

All three of these problems are encapsulated by one broader overarching issue. Is the disagreement between Rolle and these two authors a real difference of opinion about the nature of angelic song, or is it instead a miscommunication about the philosophical and theological problems regarding angelic embodiment and language?

The silence of the angel in the Royal manuscript is one small, illustrative example of the ways lay devotion was influenced by contemporary philosophical understandings of angelic being and the nature of angelic communication, and it helps to shed light on the issues of embodiment and song present in a discussion of Rolle, Hilton, and the *Cloud*-author. As Henry Mayr-Harting notes, angels, understood at the beginning of the medieval period as active interventionists, were, by the beginning of the Renaissance, also paragons of contemplative inaction, their spiritual bodies part of a celestial hierarchy that was concerned primarily with the theoretical plenitude of the created universe.⁶⁴ The Royal manuscript presents just one iteration of a whole spectrum of opinions about angelic communication available to a 14th-16th-century reader or writer, a range of readings that engaged with contemporary theology with differing degrees of pedantry, exactitude, and anxiety. Rolle and his two later respondents lived in worlds in which philosophical and theological investigations of angelic communication could mean any number of things. Opinions on the more nuanced elements of angelic communication were determined by a writer's understanding of human mental operations rather than his views on subtypes of mystical experience – though the two things are, of course, related. Rolle struck a chord with a variety of reading and writing audiences with vastly different fluencies regarding theology and scholastic philosophy, and his reception – whether mostly negative or mostly positive – was determined by how proximate to philosophy his respondents imagined themselves to be.

⁶⁴ Mayr-Harting, Henry. *Perceptions of Angels in History: An Inaugural Lecture Delivered in the University of Oxford on 14 November 1997*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 13-4.

For medieval mystics and devotional writers, then, angels were both a problem and an opportunity. Rolle is the earliest English writer to discuss angelic song in detail, as well as the most popular, and he must serve as the basis for any discussion of angelic song in a late medieval English context. All three authors are vital to the landscape of English mysticism, but Rolle was the one with the cult, he was the one for whom the *Officium et Miracula* were composed, and he was the one around whom angelic discourse circled; when Hilton and the *Cloud*-author discussed angelic interaction, they were responding to Rolle. In addition, all three authors sit at the crossroads of popular literature and devotion, with its emotive interest in Guardian Angels, and theological writing concomitant with its hyper-acute focus on angels as thought-problems of Christian metaphysics. Because all three interfaced with the fuzzy border between the mundane and the supermundane, all three had to deal with the topic of angels, and to do so explicitly. They did not have the option, like the Royal Psalter, of remaining diplomatically silent on the nature of angelic interaction.

This chapter will not begin with Rolle, but instead with Walter Hilton and the *Cloud*-author, only returning at the end to discuss Rollean *canor* in relation to his later respondents. All too often in contemporary critical literature, Rolle is presented as the background or forerunner for Hilton and the *Cloud*; this means that Rollean *canor* is, purely through the structure of the argument, superseded by the “apophatic” mystics whose only critical advantage was to be born later in history. By inverting the order of presentation, Rolle will have the last chance to speak. Hopefully this will highlight the ways in which Hilton, the *Cloud*-author, and modern medieval criticism simplify Rollean angelic communication, mystical language, and *musica celestis*, to the detriment of the

nuanced arguments about mental and devotional landscapes Richard Rolle is actually making.

Walter Hilton on Angels' Song

Walter Hilton (1343-1396) is best known for this two-book vernacular devotional treatise *The Scale of Perfection*, but his *oeuvre* also includes a few shorter English works and a series of letters written in Latin. Hilton studied law at Cambridge, but later became a solitary and then an Augustinian monk; as a result his work is suffused with both the procedural advice one might expect from a canon lawyer as well as the empathetic apothegms of the *cura monialium*.⁶⁵ Although his work ranges in its thematic scope – the English texts are addressed to a general audience, the Latin letters to specific recipients on specific points of pastoral care – Hilton is an iconoclast throughout them.⁶⁶ For Hilton, following Augustine and many others, man's interior identity is structured like an image, and the language he uses to express himself is itself a sort of image or similitude.⁶⁷ However, in Hilton's depiction, the fallen human is broken, both personally

⁶⁵ The first book is addressed specifically to anchoresses or spirituals, while the second is dedicated to all Christians who might wish to follow a contemplative life. *The Scale of Perfection* was used by English and Latin readers alike, and used as a text for devotional instruction through the 17th century. Augustine Baker made sure that the nuns under his direction at Cambrai had access to the work. Hilton joined the priory of Thurgarton, Nottinghamshire. See Clark, John P. H. "Hilton, Walter (c. 1343-96)" in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* In Clark's biography of Hilton, he suggests that he is not an apophatic mystic, but the story is more complex than this. *The Scale of Perfection*, "Of Angels' Song," the *Epistola ad quemdam seculo renunciare volentem*, *Epistola de lectione, intencione, oracione, meditacione, et aliis*, the *De Imagine Peccati*, and the *Epistola de Utilitate et Prerogativis Religionis* iterate a form of pastoral care and mystical operation that is allied with the apophatic tradition while eschewing some of its mellifluous rhetoric.

⁶⁷ As Hilton says in *De Imagine Peccati*, the devout worshipper should rely on imagistic mnemonic systems to identify the "body of evil" in himself; he should then literally

and linguistically. The internal image that structures his identity is a jumbled puzzle, missing pieces and fragmented by sin.

As Hilton says in *De Imagine Peccati*, the contemplative should only rely on imagistic mnemonic systems and their attendant language to identify the “body of evil” in himself; he should then literally deconstruct the *imagine peccati*, reforming both his soul and body in the *imago et similitudo Dei*: the image and similitude of God. As he does so, the final stages of mystical contemplation discard even these images, and, along with them, human language, itself an image-based symptom of postlapsarian human weakness. “I will be able to describe to you the corrupt image,” Hilton says, “which you will tear up and destroy, and build and sculpt a new interior man made in the image and similitude of God.”⁶⁸ As it turns out, this imagistic linguistic anthropology is at the heart of Hilton’s rejection of Rollean *canor*.⁶⁹

deconstruct this *imagine peccati*, reforming both his soul and body in the image of Christ. In the final rungs of contemplation, he should divest himself of images and mnemonics, and, at the same time, of the restricting confines of language. This is a sentiment that is prevalent throughout Christian theology.

⁶⁸ *Per Dei gratiam apercius describam tue corrupcionis ymaginem, vt tu euellas et dissipis illam veterem, et edifices et sculpes nouam interioris hominis ad imaginem et similitudinem Dei*. See Clark, John P.H. and Cheryl Taylor. “*De Imagine Peccati*,” *Walter Hilton’s Latin Writings, Vol. 1*. (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1987), p.73).

⁶⁹ Hilton has already said as much in the *Scale of Perfection*: “Sotheli y hadde lever feele and have a sothfast desire and a clene love longynge in myn herte to my Lord Jhesu, though y myghte not seen of His Godhede with my goostli iye, thanne for to have withoutin this desire alle bodili penaunce of alle men lyvynges, alle visious or revelacions of angels apperynges, songes and sownes, savours or smelles, brennynges and ony likynges, bodili felande, and schortli for to seie, alle the joies of hevene and of erthe whiche y myght have withouten this desire to my Lord Jhesu.” Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, Bestuhl, Thomas, Ed. (Kalamazoo, Michigan: medieval Institute Publications, 2000), ll. 1353-1358. This doesn’t mean angels don’t play a part in the ascent of the soul. In fact, Hilton allows for visions of the angelic choir as part of contemplative life: “And thanne afir this [prayer] bi the selve mai the soule seen goosteli the fairheed of angelis, the worthinesse of hem in kende, the sotilté in substaunce, the

Hilton spends most of *De imagine peccati* talking about the *occulis mentis* and its connection to confession and critical self-awareness. As a result of his focus on visual input, Hilton's commentary on sensation and sin often elides vision with other sense-perceptibles, like hearing. When Hilton critiques *canor*, he is critiquing the human being as structured by human language. As a result, Hilton doesn't take into account the differences between sight and sound as sense modalities, and the different effects they may have on language, communication, and, ultimately on *musica celestis*, or, more importantly, the idea that "*imago et similitudo*" may not be the only way to articulate linguistic ability or humanity. For Hilton, both are based on similitudes, and human mental language is dependent on sense-perception. This is a large part of the reason that Hilton and Rolle disagree on the language of angels: Hilton assumes that the *occulis*

confermyng of hem in grace, and the fulnesse of eendeles blisse; the sondriheed of ordres, the distinccon of persoones, hou thei leven al in light of endelees sothfastnesse and hou thei brennen al in love of the Hooli Goost aftir the worthynesse of ordres, hou thei seen and loven and preisen Jhesu in blissed reste withouten ceesyng. There is noo sight of bodi ne figure in ymaginacion in this maner wirkyng, but al goosteli of goosteli creatures" (Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, ed. Bestuhl, ll. 3525-3531); he also mentions with some frankness the audiation of angels: "*Hec enim omnia cum aliis beneficiis Dei tibi graciose collatis, ex scripture tue serie me intime considerante, magna leticia spiritualis inuasit subito cor meum in laudem saluatoris erectum ac si nunciam angelicum audissem*" See Clark, John P.H. and Cheryl Taylor. "*Epistola ad quemdam seculo renunciare volentem*," in *Walter Hilton's Latin Writings*, Vol. 2. (Salzburg: *Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik*, 1987), p. 249. The first of these references is to spiritual appearances. Again, the role of spiritual contemplation is turn all sense-perception into spiritual vision. Furthermore, this vision is not the *goal* of contemplation, which is instead "with helpe of aungelis," to rise "aboven al this in a cleene soule, and that is to bihoolden the blissed kynde of Jhesu" (ll. 3546-7) and to an understanding of the Godhead. Here, the relationship between vision and spiritual enlightenment comes to the fore.

mentis and *locutio mentis* are one and the same, and angels, disconnected from sensible species, have a fundamentally different basis for their language than the human psyche.⁷⁰

Hilton's longest sustained commentary on *canor* is *Of Angels' Song*.⁷¹ This English treatise is addressed to an unspecified "dere brother in Cryste" who wishes to discern between proper and improper communication with God.⁷² The interlocutor wants to know, according to Hilton, both "aungels sange and heuenly sown,"

qwat it is, and on qat wyse it is perceyued and felid in a manns soule, and how a man may be sekyr that it is trowe and nou3t feyned, and how it is made be the presence of the gude aungel and nou3t be the inputtynge of the ille aungel.⁷³

Hilton's introduction outlines the most important questions about angelic communion. What is it, and how is it felt? From whom does it come, and how can the contemplative discern its origins? In other words, what senses does a human being use to "hear" *musica celestis*, and how can the contemplative turn sense-perception into discernment, into intellect?

⁷⁰ Hilton also has an issue with Rollean *Incendium Amoris*, for similar reasons, as *The Scale of Perfection* illustrates: "Alle men and women that speken of the fier of love knowe not wel what it is, for what it is I can not telle thee, save this may I telle thee, it is neither bodili, ne it is bodili feelid. A soule mai fele it in praier or in devocioun, whiche soule is in the bodi, but he felith it not bi no bodili witt. For though it be so, that yif it wirke in a soule the bodi mai turne into an heete as it were chafid for likynge travaile of the spirit, nevertheles the fier of love is not bodili, for it is oonly in the goostli desire of the soule. This is no doute to no man ne woman that felith and knoweth devocion, but summe aren so symple and wenen bicause that it is callid fier that it schulde be hoot as bodili fier is. And forthi I seie that I have seid. Now as to that othir, for to knowe what prayer were best for to use, y schal seie as me thenkith. Thou schalt undirstonde that there are thre maner of praieres" See Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, ed. Bestuhl, ll. 670-9.

⁷¹ This is found in two manuscripts, Cambridge, University library, MS Ff.VI.40 and Dd.V.55, as well as an early printed version by Pepwell in 1521. See Hilton, Walter. "Of Angels Song." in *Yorkshire Writers*, Ed. C. Horstmann (New York: MacMillan and Co, 1895).

⁷² "Of Angels' Song," 175.

⁷³ Ibid.

Hilton responds by reminding his reader that the purpose and end of religious experience is the “verray oned of god and man saule be parfite charite.”⁷⁴ In other words, *canor* will be proven to be salutary if it results in the reformation of the soul to the image and likeness of God, to unification with him in perfected love. Although complete reformation must wait until the afterlife, some souls are cleansed by charity so that

Alle that he heris, or sees, or felis be any of hys wyttis, turnys hym to conforte and gladnes, and the sensulaite reseuyes new sauoure and swetenes in ale creatures, and ry3t as before the lykynges in the sensualyte were fleschely, vayn, and vicious for the payne of the original synne, ry3t so now thay ere made gastly and clene with-outyn bytternes and bytynge of conscience.⁷⁵

In the mind that has been made a proper receptacle of holy phenomena (through grace and charity), all of the intentional qualities of creation are attuned to spiritual fervor. Hearing, feeling, and seeing are all reduced to the blanket term “lykynges in the sensualyte,” another term for perceptible similitudes; human psychology, even at its highest spiritual attainment, is represented as sense(ible).

The soul attuned to God cannot help but resonate with the material of creation: all sense-perceptions turn the mind to comfort. The transformation of the soul into God is a means not of perfecting the soul, but of perfecting the qualitative and connotative

⁷⁴ Ibid. In other words, the point of religion is to allow God’s being and man’s soul to unify in participation; the Aristotelian “end” indicates Hilton’s investment in the vernacular promotion of causality according to philosophical models. For in-depth studies on Aristotelianism in the vernacular in late medieval England, see Collette, Carolyn, “Aristotle, Translation and the Mean: Shaping the Vernacular in medieval Anglo-French Culture,” *Language and Culture in medieval Britain*. (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2009); Copeland, Rita, and Ineke Sluiter, *medieval Grammar and Rhetoric: Language Arts and Literary Theory, AD 300 – 1475* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Simpson, James. *Reform and Cultural Revolution, Vol. 2: 1350-1547* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Cannon, Christopher. *The Making of Chaucer’s English: A Study of Words*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁷⁵ “Of Angels’ Song,” 177.

reception of sense-perceptibles in the world around the mystic as they serve as aides to reform the inner imagistic structure of man's psyche and of his speech. This is why Hilton both admits *musica celestis* into mystic experience while immediately deconstructing it:

Also oure lorde confortes a saule be aungels sange. Qwat that sange is, it may nou3t be discried be na bodily lykenese, for it is gastly and abouen almaner of ymagynacion and reson. It may be felid and perceyued in a saule, bot it may not be schewed.⁷⁶

The movement of the interior being is divorced from rational articulation, but why? Hilton identifies *canor* as always lacking, always above *imaginatio* and *ratio*, and yet the feeling and perception – the experience and the attainment of wisdom – is separate from the visual apparatus that attends it. This is an auditory remnant completely divorced from any possibilities for “shewing;” it escapes language. Hilton suggests that the body can feel *canor*, but, because the human mind understands sense-perception through similitude (through images) – and angelic song is beyond both comparison and ocular depiction – *canor* is not a legitimate object of the human intellect. The only way that Hilton can understand angelic song is by moving away from perception and feeling altogether to the means by which *canor* operates as God's hierophanic grace. *Canor* is phenomenon and

⁷⁶ Ibid, 177. Hilton says the same thing in his other treatises. “For in vertues and in knowynge of God with love is noo disceit. But al swich maner of feelyng thei mowe by gode, wrought bi a good angil, and they may be deceyvable, feyned bi a wikkid angel whan he transfigurith him into an angel of light. Wherefore sithen thei moun be bothe good and yvel, it semeth that thei aren not of the beste; for wyte thou weel that the devyl may, whanne he hath leve, feyne in bodili feline the liknes of the same thinges whiche a good angil may worche. For as the good angil cometh with light, so can the [fol. 10v]devel, and so of othere wittes. Whoso hadde felid bothe, he schulde kunne telle whiche were gode and whiche were yvele, but he that nevere feelid neither, or elles but that oon, may lightli be disseyved.” (*The Scale of Perfection*, Bestuhl, fol 10r-v)

function, but it is not an object to be studied. Because of this, Hilton concludes that angels' song is "gastly, and no3t bodyly."⁷⁷

Hilton adds to this sentiment in *De imagine peccati*. Once the contemplative has cleansed his mind of all earthly images, he tells his reader that had he heard the sound of heaven,

you would have had a sharp and penetrating spiritual vision in the contemplation of spiritual things; you would have fed on these things, and your heart would have been satisfied with this delicacy. And you would have heard, moreover, the praise of God without the sound of the body, and purely in the intellect of the mind, having chanted a sweet melody abstracted from all creatures.⁷⁸

The process of hearing angelic song is about abstracting the mind from the body; when the intellect operates at its highest levels it is disconnected from corporeal feeling and therefore from language. Hilton locates *canor* as an abstract mental operation based on a spiritual vision. He does not resolve the problem here: the mystic who "hears" angels song still "hears" within an intellect that has been preconditioned to operate based on sensory input.

This is what makes angels' song such a difficult topic. Because of "the difference that es atwyze a mans saule in flesche and an aungell," – that is, between the operation of man's intellect within his material body and the intellect of an angel, which does not have a body – "a saule may nou3t here [angels' song] bot be rauyschyng in lufe."⁷⁹ That is, the materiality of human flesh predetermines that all sensory input be understood through

⁷⁷ Ibid, 178.

⁷⁸ *Haberes visum spiritualem acutum et perspicacem in contemplacione rerum spiritualium quibus pasceres cor tuum satis delicate. Audires eciam laudes Dei sine sono corporis, puro intellectu mentis, ab omni creatura dulci modulamine decantatas.* See Clark, John P.H. and Cheryl Taylor. "De imagine peccati," *Walter Hilton's Latin Writings*, Vol. 1. (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1987), pp. 94-95.

⁷⁹ "Of Angels' Song," 178.

and filtered by the *imaginatio*; this in turn means that the song of angels, which is divorced from physicality, is totally incomprehensible to human logic. The only means by which the soul is able to hear angelic song is through ravishing; again, *canor* is not the experience of song, but the functional operation of suffused grace.

Angels' song is not primarily about angels, but is, instead, about the sinner's unification with God; again, the end result of *canor* is revelation of "goddies priuety" initially operated through the senses and their attendant images. "For ry3t as a saule in vndyrstandynge of gastly thyngis is oftesythes towchyd and kenned thorow bodili ymaginaion,"

ry3t swa in the lufe of god a saule be presence of aungels is rauyschyd out of mynde of alle erthely and fleschely thynges in to an heuenly Ioye, to here aungelis songe and heuenly sowne, eftyr the charite is more or lesse.⁸⁰

In this system, *canor* is subordinated to its operative import, which is "the souereyn and the essencial ioye in the lufe of god be hym-selfe and for hym-selfe." "Communynge and behaldynge of aungels and gastily creaturis" is only "secundarie."⁸¹

Communing with angels and ghostly creatures is a mediated form of participating in the godhead,

for ryghte as a saule in vndirstandynge of gastely thynges es ofte-sythes touched and kennede thurghe bodyly ymagynacyone, by wyrkyng of aungells – as Ezechielle the profete sawe in bodily ymagynacyoune the sothefastnes of goddes preuates – righte so, in the lufe of godde, a saule be the presence of aungelles es rauesched owte of all mynde of erthely and fleschely thynges in to a heuenly ioye.⁸²

⁸⁰ Ibid, 178.

⁸¹ Ibid, 178.

⁸² Ibid, 178.

Just as Ezekiel saw angels, was visited by them, and reported about them to the world, Hilton admits that a human, blessed with very special grace, may have experience of angels' song. This song is not, of course, an end of itself: angels' song ought not to be the pinnacle or the goal of mystical experience, but, instead, another stop on the route to God's perfect love. The goal of mystical practice is the sovereign and essential participation in God for Himself and by Himself.

Rollean *canor* is, therefore, immediately suspect. It treats *musica celestis* as an end rather than a means to God; it also miscegenates physical and metaphysical experience. "Some men" – like Rolle – "ere desayued by thayr awen ymagynacion, or by illusyon of the enemy," he says, relying again on the imagistic-linguistic basis of his epistemologic soteriology:

Some man qwen he has lange trauvalid bodili and gastily in distroynge of synnes and of getyng of vertus, and perauentur has geten be grace a somdele reste and certente of conscience, anon he leues prayers, redynges of haly wrytte, and meditacions of the passyon of Criste, and the mynde of hys wrecchednes, and or he be called of god, *he gedyrs hys wyttes be vyolence to seke and to behald heuenly thynges er hys eyghe be made gastly be grace*, and *ouertravailis be ymagynacions hys wyttes*, and be vndiscrete travelynge turns the braynes in hys heued and *forbrekes the my3tes and the wittes of the saule and of the body*: and than for febelnes of the brayn hym thynke that he heris wondyrfull sownes and sanges; and that is na thyng elis bot a fantasye caused of trobelynge of the brayn – as a man that is in a fransy, hym thynke that he heris and sees that nan othir man does, and al is bot vanite and fantasy of the heued.⁸³

Note the operational psychology that Hilton ascribes to the deceived contemplative. His logical faculties ("wyttes," "my3tes") are overtaken by a proleptic imagination (his "eyghe" has not yet been "made gastly be grace"). In other words, the similitudinous receptive capacity of the mind has not been transmuted away from sensuality; in this

⁸³ Ibid, 179-80.

system in which all sense perception is based on the “eye,” the quantum shift from the “physical” eye to the “spiritual” one makes all the difference for *discretio spirituum* and for reception of angelic language.⁸⁴

It’s not as though Hilton doesn’t have respect for language, for prayers and for song, or for the operations of the human mind. In fact, psalms and church hymns are efficacious in Hilton’s devotional project whereas Rolle finds them almost completely useless.⁸⁵ Although physicality and spirituality are certainly at odds in Hilton’s devotional framework, the mind’s eye requires a devotional focal point; as the body eschews visual input, Hilton suggests that specific words aligned with song replace them. These words, however, ought to be phrases approved by the Church:

Thynke sum tyme on the blissid name Jhesu... [and on] alle othere praieres, as the *Pater Noster* or the *Ave Maria* or ympnys of psalmes or other devoute seyynges of Holi Chirche.⁸⁶

These prayers are transmuted into “gostli mirthe and swete songe” as the physical ear is changed to spiritual matters.⁸⁷ For Hilton, the proper use of song relies primarily on whether it is prescribed or not, specifically, prayers to the Holy Name, the *Pater Noster*, the *Ave Maria*, and hymns, psalms, and devout sayings are all allowed: these are

⁸⁴ This is why the highest part of contemplative life, the one that is hardest to achieve, requires corporeal rest. “Sitte stille in reste of bodi and for to alwey pray to God and to thynke on oure Lord. See Hilton, Walter. *The Scale of Perfection*. Thomas H. Bestul, Ed. (Kalamazoo: TEAMS Middle English Texts Series, 2000), p. 37.

⁸⁵ Installation of liturgical song within the being of the mystic causes a reciprocal indwelling. The church enters into the heart, and the mystic into the church. “*Magnus est effectus huius oracionis, non ex merito dicentis credentis tamen, sed ex merito ecclesie cuius uice oras, nam organum ecclesie tu es in hoc. Si quis ecclesiam agnoscret, uirtutem huius oracionis intelligeret.*” See Clark, John P.H. and Cheryl Taylor. “*Epistola de leccione, intencione, oracione, meditacione, et aliis,*” *Walter Hilton’s Latin Writings*, Vol. 2. (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1987, 236)

⁸⁶ Hilton, Walter. *The Scale of Perfection*. Thomas H. Bestul, Ed. (Kalamazoo: TEAMS Middle English Texts Series, 2000), p. 37.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

prepackaged objects of devotion that make language referentially safer than free-floating *excessus mentis* or *iubilus*.⁸⁸ For, just as the physical eye is made “gastly,” the physical ear is made spiritual, too: songs of the Church, like the *imago Dei*, provide particular objects to which the human subject conforms, and singing the liturgy assures an alignment of self with truth that Rollean *canor* does not.⁸⁹ Again, where Hilton and Rolle differ is not in the procedures of contemplation, nor in the bodily comportment of the contemplative, but rather in the most profound determiner of human experience: the internal mental structure of representations. Hilton’s suspicion of free-floating song is due in part to his nuanced understanding of the role of language as it relates to the structure of the human soul.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ See the *Epistola de lectione, intencione, oracione, meditacione, et aliis* for more: “*Et reuera tu qui sacerdos es horas canonicas ceteris preponere debes et cum maiori deuocione et attentione exsoluere si poteris. In dicendo non festines ad finem, nec tedio afficiaris, quasi graue iudicans tale onus tibi inponi eo quod liberius velles seruiere Deo.*” in Clark, John P.H. and Cheryl Taylor. “Epistola de lectione, intencione, oracione, meditacione, et aliis,” *Walter Hilton’s Latin Writings*, Vol. 2. (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1987), 235.

⁸⁹ “*Non credas hanc oracionem fore fidei, spei et caritatis expertem. Ymmo fluit, habundat affluentissime, etsi tu non hoc semper sencias, quia licet tu forte corde arido et oculo ceco sis, fidei, spei et caritatis in orando modicum uel nichil senciens in affectu, ecclesia tamen, cuius nomina oras, hac triplici uirtute perfecte dotata est.*” Ibid, p. 236.

⁹⁰ Psalms and hymns need not be oral in order to be efficacious; they should, however, be prayers of the heart, the *verbum cordis*. The tie to a *verbum cordis* is an Augustinian idea – that words formed in the mind are always anterior to words formed by the mouth. “*Item adhuc forsā dicis quod habes aliud impedimentum, eo quod nescis cantare, vel forsā turbatus es in lingua et in modo pronunciandi, precipue in facie et in auditu aliorum, in tantum quod non uales distincte verba oracionis vel psalmodie vel consimilium proferre, et ex hoc impedimento solet oriri frequenter in corde tuo quidam pudor et quasi confusio, que forsā faceret cor tuum nimis amarum et turbulentum.*” In Hilton’s *Epistola de Utilitate et Prerogativis Religionis*, was addressed to Adam Horsley, the exchequer official who moved to the Beauvale charterhouse in 1386, and as such is more concerned with silent song than his other treatises. See Clark, John P.H. and Cheryl Taylor. “*Epistola de utilitate et prerogativis religionis,*” *Walter Hilton’s Latin Writings*, Vol. 1. (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1987), p. 163.

When God speaks in your heart (*locutio[...]* *in corde*), this infuses you with contrition and compunction, but you will not be able to feel it, because “The word of God is living,” as the Apostle says, “and it is more effective and penetrating than a double-edged sword, dividing the soul (*anima*) from the spirit (*spiritus*).”⁹¹

The language and revelations of God differentiate between the soul and the spirit, an anthropological distinction culled from the definition of *anima* found in Isidore of Seville’s *Etymologiae* XI, I 13, where *anima* enlivens the sensing body, and *spiritus* the voiceless one.⁹² As God’s Word perfects the human soul, separating its sensing portion (*anima*), from its non-sensing faculty (*spiritus*), and action which makes words – as we understand them –unnecessary. If words are unnecessary, so is the type of angelic communication outlined by Rolle. God’s language bypasses angelic communication and, with it, angelic song. Rollean *canor* is obsolete so long as God speaks directly to the heart of the mystic.

Thus properly attuned, the mystic has no use for angels’ song. Instead, “it lykes the saule euymore for to crye *Ihesu, Ihesu*,” says Hilton, as well as the “psalmys and

⁹¹ This is a quotation from Hebrews 4:12. “*Locutio enim Dei in corde tuo infusio contricionis et compuncionis est, quam non sentire non poteris, quia: Viuus est sermo Dei, ut dicit Apostolus, et efficax et penetrabilior omni gladio ancipiti, et pertingit vsque ad diuisionem anime et spiritus.*” See Clark, John P.H. and Cheryl Taylor. “*Epistola ad quemdam seculo renunciare volentem*,” *Walter Hilton’s Latin Writings*, Vol. 2. (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1987), p. 251.

⁹² “*Anima pro diversis actionibus diversa nomina sortitur; dum vivificat corpus, Anima est; dum vult, Animus est; dum scit, Mens est; dum recolit, Memoria est; dum iudicat, Ratio est; dum sentit, Sensus est; dum amat, Amor est; dum negat vel consentit, Conscientia est; dum spirat, Spiritus est.*” See Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, XI.i.13, *Patrologia Latina*, Col 082. The distinction between *spiritus*, *cor*, *anima*, *mens*, and *conscientia* is one that appears often in medieval and Early Modern theological treatises. *Piers Plowman* (B.XV) contains a passage in which *Anima* lists his parts. For a discussion of the difference between these terms elsewhere see Ozment, Steven E. *Homo Spiritualis: A Comparative Study of the Anthropology of Johannes Tauler, Jean Gerson, and Martin Luther in the Context of their Theological Thought*. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969).

ympnes and antympnes of haly kyrke[...] in the same toune and notes that haly kyrke uses.” *Canor* is unnecessary because liturgical song is a “gyfte of god,” the substance of which is “the lufe of Ihesu” himself.⁹³ The love of Jesus – the Word of God – ultimately separates the singing *anima* from the flesh, resulting in sensible silence. This silence is not angels’ song. What is it?

Near the end of the *Scale of Perfection*, Hilton provides an answer: it is the “homely,” private speech of Christ to the soul.⁹⁴

Some man settis the thou3te of hys hert haly in the name of Ihesu and stedfastly haldys it therto, and than in schorte tyme hym thynkes that name turnys til hym to grete profete, conforte and swetenes, and hym thynke the name souens in hys herte delytably as it ware a sange, and the vertu of this lykyng is swa my3tty that it draws in alle wyttes of the saule therto.⁹⁵

The name of Jesus is spiritual song; It transmutes the soul into a “wheel” of charity, formed with “but fewe words[...] in the herte.”⁹⁶

And therefore whanne it sowneth in a soule it is of so greet myght sumtyme, that the soule sodenly leith of hande al that there is – praiynge, spekyng, redyng, or thenkyng in manere bfore seid, and al maner bodili werk – and lesteneth therto fulli, herende, perceyvande in reste and in love the swete stevene of this goostli vois, as it were ravesched fro the

⁹³ “Of Angels’ Song,” 181. The cult of the Holy Name is a form of devotion that has direct repercussions on the types of joy a man will feel in heaven: “Also y mai seie, on anothir manere, that he that cannot love this blissid name Jhesu with goostli mirthe, ne enjoie in it with heveneli melodie here, he schal nevere have ne fele in hevne that fulhed of sovereyne joie the whiche he that myght in this liyf bi habundaunce of perflight charité enjoie in Jhesu schal fele and have, and so mai here seiynge ben undirstande.” See Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, ed. Bestuhl, ll. 1252-5.

⁹⁴ Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, ed. Bestuhl, ll. 3403-4, 3408. In this chapter, whose full title is “Of the privei vois of Jhesu sounned in a soule, wherebi it mai be knowen; and hou alle the gracious illuminaciouns maad in a soule aren called the spekynges of Jhesu,” Hilton goes into some detail about the *locutio cordis*.

⁹⁵ “Of Angels’ Song,” 180-1.

⁹⁶ Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, ed. Bestuhl, l. 3436. Hilton explains that the soul perfectly tuned to God is “round in vertues withouten angil of frowardnesse,” a geometrical formulation that appears to be unique to Hilton (l. 3412).

mynde of alle ertheli thynges.⁹⁷

Mystical locution is not the song of separated angelic substance; instead, it is the result of a contemplative function separating one element of the human interior (the soul, *anima*) from another (the spirit, *spiritus*). Elsewhere, Hilton has called this locution by other terms, ones that have resonances with other mystical treatises of the late fourteenth century. “He calleth thee wel ofte,” says Hilton to the reader of his *Scale of Perfection*,

with His swete prevy vois and stireth thyn herte wel stilli, that thou schuldest leve alle othere jangelynge of vanitees in thi soule and oonli take keep to Him for to heere Him speke.⁹⁸

The “privy” voice of God – the *locutio mentis* – is the same thing that God gives to Julian of Norwich when he speaks to her “in her thought.” It is the word of the mind, an idea disconnected from not only from sensible species, but from all notions and structures attendant to physicality. It comes directly from Christ. What this voice is *not*, Hilton makes clear, is the song of angels, *canor*, or *musica celestis* as Rolle described it. “This is nou3t aungels songe, bot it is a sange of the saule be vertu of the name, and be towchyng of the gude aungell.”⁹⁹ Hilton collapses the *verbum mentis* and *locutio cordis* into a private language, a phone line direct from God to man, eliminating the need for angelic speech altogether.¹⁰⁰ Angels are superfluous in Hilton’s account of grace and mystical experience, for, once Jesus’ holy name has touched and clarified the soul, the soul has already surpassed the separated substances of the angelic realm and been placed next to its Savior. This hierophanic experience of Jesus does not require angelic bodies,

⁹⁷ Ibid, ll. 3421-5.

⁹⁸ Ibid, ll. 1444-1450.

⁹⁹ “Of Angels’ Song,” 180-1.

¹⁰⁰ Aquinas proposes something similar in the *Summa Theologica*, in his section “On the Knowledge of the Separated Soul. See below, page 35ff.

angelic language, angelic mental acuity, or the participation in the celestial hierarchy.

The ultimate goal of the *locutio cordis* is to pray “oonli in herte withoute speche,” which is a “grete reste of the bodi and of soule... so that here affeccioun is turnyd into goostli savoure, that thei moun neer contynueli prairie in here herte.”¹⁰¹ As we will see later, Rolle’s understanding of the human subject necessitates a much different view of *canor*.

The Cloud of Unknowing on Angels’s Song

Walter Hilton’s objection to Rollean *canor* is made based on the human psyche and language: both are structured through images and through sense-perception; the angelic mind, and therefore angelic language and song, operate completely differently than the human mind and are therefore incompatible with it.

The author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* takes issue with Rollean *canor* for a different, albeit related, reason. The *Cloud* is one of the most beautiful and masterful texts in the apophatic mystical tradition, but it is not simply its apophaticism that serves as a base for its rejection of Rollean *canor*. Instead, the tension is rooted in the relationship the *Cloud* sees between time-bound, human mental operations and the inability of this sort of psychology to perceive angelic song.¹⁰² Like Hilton, the *Cloud*-author claims that human and angelic mental languages are fundamentally incompatible, but for the *Cloud*, it is the temporality and mensurality of the human psyche – as opposed to the immediate cognition of intellectual beings – that is the fundamental problem. For the *Cloud*-author, language, song, and the human mind are all unfold in quantifiable time:

¹⁰¹ Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, ed. Bestuhl, ll 790-6.

¹⁰² The *Cloud* can be found in three manuscripts: British Library MS Harley 674, British Library MS Royal 17 C xxvi and Cambridge University Library Kk.vi.26.

words, ideas, and music occur in discrete temporalities (and are marked by philosophy, knowledge, and also rupture from divinity). On the other hand, angelic awareness is a product of continuous time (expressed in holy love, mysticism, and unification with the deity). This second type of awareness is not natural to humans, and requires a shift beyond anthropological types of thought. How does the *Cloud*'s understanding of quanta, time, and measurability affect its views of language and music, specifically, angels' song? Whereas Hilton focused on sense-perception as unquantifiable qualities, the *Cloud*-author looks to its opposite: discussions of infinity and the infinitesimal, of the relation of mathematics to angelic being, and how *these* relate to language and subjectivity.¹⁰³

Near the end of the *Cloud of Unknowing*, the anonymous author enumerates his problems with the hyperliteral, image-dependent readers of Scripture who either “rede, or here redde or spoken” how they ought to engage in contemplation. These foolish mystics unthinkingly follow the rules for their physical comportment, as they

lift up here hertes unto God, thei stare in the sterres as thei wolde be aboven the mone, and herkyn when thei schul here any aungelles synge oute of heven. Thees men willen sumtyme with the coriousté of there ymaginacion peerce the planetes, and make an hole in the firmament to loke in therate. Thees men wil make a God as hem lyst, and clothen hym ful richely in clothes, and set hym in a trone, fer more curiously than ever was he depeynted in this erthe. Thees men wil maken aungelles in bodely licnes, and set hem aboute ich one with diverse minstralsie, fer more corious than ever was any seen or herde in this liif.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ The *Cloud*-author's dedication to apophaticism and proximity to pseudo-Dionysian thought is not at issue here. The *Cloud of Unknowing* encourages the reader to cast herself into a space of ignorance – of the world, of the word, and of God – in order to attain to the realm of spiritual enlightenment.

¹⁰⁴ Gallacher, Patrick J, Ed. *The Cloud of Unknowing*. (Kalamazoo: TEAMS, 1997). ll. 1978-1986. The *Cloud*-author is asking, in the 14th century, his readers to discard the sort of images of song that Chris Page discusses in his seminal work critiquing modernity's

The *Cloud*-author addresses, with more than a little sarcasm, cataphatic mystics and their dupes, who are either vernacular contemplatives or those who only have knowledge of theology and hierophanic theory second-hand: those who hear these words “redde or spoken,” like Margery Kempe *avant le lettre*. There is a third group interpellated in this critique as well: theologian-philosophers like Walter Hilton who mistakenly mix the revelatory, imagistic, and corporeal operations of worship with the interior composition of the human mind. These men, no matter how erudite as they may be, are incapable of understanding the difference between the psychic matrix of physical-mental operations and its spiritual appropriation or signification. These rubes are like the Reeve of Chaucer’s *Miller’s Tale*, rubes in contemplative clothing, easily fooled by Hendy Nicholas. “Somme of thees men the devil wil disceyve wonderfully,” he warns,

For he wil seende a maner of dewe -- aungelles foode thei wene it be -- as it were comyng oute of the eire, and softly and sweetly fallyng in theire mowthes; and therefore thei have it in costume to sitte gapyng as thei wolde kacche flies. Now trewly alle this is bot disceyte, seme it never so holy; for thei have in this tyme ful emty soules of any trewe devocion. Moche vanitee and falsheed is in theire hertes, causid of theire corious worchyng, insomoche that oftetyms the devil feyneth queinte sounes in theire eres, queynte lightes and schinyng in theire ighen, and wonderful smelles in theire nosen; and al is bot falsheed.¹⁰⁵

The *Cloud* paints the cataphatic contemplative as a locus of derision and Rolle’s unwitting dupe. Though the sense-perceptions he feels may be viscerally real, he is incapable of judging the spiritual validity of physical phenomena, so dependent is he on external things; his *discretio spirituum* is tautological. The *Cloud* relates Rollean

tendency to do the same. See Page, Christopher. *Discarding Images: Reflections on Music and Culture in medieval France*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

¹⁰⁵ Gallacher, Patrick J, Ed. *The Cloud of Uknowing*. (Kalamazoo: TEAMS, 1997), ll. 1987-1995.

“angelic speech” to this sort of physical phenomena: though the mystic definitely hears *something*, it is not the song of angels, nor is it salutary.

In attempting to deconstruct sensed phenomena, the *Cloud* concerns itself not with particular sense-modalities, but instead with temporalities, and, in particular, with musical time. Like time in general, musical time is divided. However, some musics, particularly the complex polyphony of the late medieval *ars nova* and *ars subtilior*, required simultaneous and differing partitionings of time within a single piece of musical space, drawing attention to different types of divisibility and the “time” was built out of units composed of itself. The rhythmic structures of these musics highlighted a problematic quality of time: not only was it divisible, but its division was relative and potentially infinite.¹⁰⁶ Was time itself composed of discrete and numerable atomic units, or was it absolutely continuous, imminantly subdividable into infinity?¹⁰⁷ This question

¹⁰⁶ The first group, according to modern scholarship, would include thinkers like William Ockham and Jacobus Leodiensis, as well as the Oxford Calculators: William Heytsbury, Robert Kilwardby, Thomas Bradwardine, Richard Kilvington, Richard Swineshead, Thomas Bradwardine and John Dumbleton, as well as Nicole Oreme (in Paris). The first of these groups is known as the *antiqui*, and the second as the *moderni*. These thinkers, known for their arithmetical, quantifying approaches to qualitative analysis, produce what looks like a “modern” take on qualitative existence and on the fundamental points of qualitative difference between human existence and angelic being. The second group, more straightforwardly Aristotelian, included Johannes de Muris. See Tanay, Dorit. *Noting Music, Marking Culture: The Intellectual Context of Rhythmic Notation, 1250-1400*. (American Institute of Musicology: Hänssler-Verlag, 1999).

¹⁰⁷ The Oxford *calculatores* of the fourteenth century would examine the problems of the temporal and spatial aspects of angelic existence from a different perspective, their work does not deal specifically with angels. See Keck, David. *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). p. 112, as well as Sylla, Edith. “medieval Quantifications of Qualities: The Merton School,” in *Archive for History of Exact Sciences* 8 (1971) : 7-39, and John Murdoch, “From Scolia into Intellectual Factors: An Aspect of the Unitary Character of late medieval Learning,” in *The Cultural Context of medieval Learning*, Murdoch and Edith Sylla, Eds (Boston: D. Reidel, 1975), pp. 271-348, for discussions about science, but Dorit Tanay’s *Noting Music, Marking*

was immediately relevant to the *Cloud*-author: if the dimensions of musical temporal possibility shifted from qualitative to quantitative, must discourse about the operations of the mind? That is, did humans come into *musica celestis* through discrete and quantifiable atoms of contemplative time, or was it the result of a continuous mellismatic engagement with God, somehow different from normal temporal human experience?

For the *Cloud*-author, the movement of the intellect into ignorance and unknowing –which is to be desired – is not a continual act, but a quantum one; once inside the space of ignorance, however, the movement to heaven is continual, divested of the calculus of the operations of the will. Contemplation “is the schortest werke of alle that man may ymagyn,” says the *Cloud*. Indivisible, it is the fundamental building block of time, “neither lenger ne schorter then is an athomus; the whiche athomus, by the diffinicion of trewe philisophres in the sciens of astronomye, is the leest partie of tyme.” Contemplative time is “so litil that, for the littilnes of it, it is undepartable and neighhonde incomprehensible.”¹⁰⁸ The concept of the infinitesimal is analogous to the incomprehensible and illogical nature of contemplation itself, yet it still follows the mathematical logic of astronomical science. It is not illogical; it is merely incomprehensible.

A little later in the treatise, the *Cloud* connects this atomic understanding of time to language and devotion. In meditative practice, the contemplative should take “bot a litil worde of o silable” as her prayer. Why? “For it is betir then of two, for ever the

Culture: The Intellectual Context of Rhythmic Notation, 1250-1400. (American Institute of Musicology: Hänssler-Verlag, 1999) provides a thorough overview as well.

¹⁰⁸ Gallacher, Patrick J, Ed. *The Cloud of Uknowing*. (Kalamazoo: TEAMS, 1997), 11 301-315.

schorter it is, the betir it acordeth with the werk of the spirite.”¹⁰⁹ The shorter a word is – the more it is unlike language that unfolds over time, and the more it is like the quantum building block of the “athomus” – the closer it is to the operational time of grace. This is a very different philosophical position from that of Hilton, whose mystic movement is related not to time, but to the separation of sensible flesh from the intellectual mind, the separation of rationality from imagination. This is a temporality for which the mystic is morally accountable, and this time-account is linguistic:

This is that tyme of the whiche it is wretyn: Alle tyme that is goven to thee, it schal be askid of thee how thou haste dispendid it. And skilful thing it is that thou geve acompte of it; for it is neither lenger ne schorter, bot even according to one only steryng that is withinne the principal worching might of thi soul, the whiche is thi wille. For even so many willinges or desiringes – and no mo ne no fewer – may be and aren in one oure in thi wille, as aren athomus in one oure. And yif thou were reformid bi grace to the first state of mans soule, as it was bfore sinne, than thou schuldest evermore, bi help of that grace, be lorde of that stering or of thoo sterynges; so that none yede forby, bot alle thei schulde streche into the soverein desirable and into the heighest wilnable thing, the whiche is God.¹¹⁰

By making time discrete, every moment of a person’s life can be counted, and accounted for; every willful action of the soul is granted its own time, and these times in the aggregate “stretche,” or form the continuity of life out of discreta. Whereas Hilton constructed the human mental landscape out of the functional capacity of rational thought, the *Cloud of Unknowing* structures human thought as an aggregate operation of the will. The infinite calculus of this will approaches God.

Song, language, and the self intersect in the idea of atomic continuity. For the *Cloud*-author, forms of mystical ascent necessitate that the lover remove herself from

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, ll 500-1.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, ll 301-315.

space and time. This work is done through the operation of infinitessimals: limit-cases of space and time that the *Cloud* articulates as monosyllabic words. As with Walter Hilton, the fundamental issues here are, first of all, the degree to which mystical experience conforms to the physical expectations of the world, and, second, to what degree these expressions are articulable. Here, however, it is the “athomus” of time, rather than the *imaginatio* of the *anima*, that is central to mysticism; even God’s divine revelations conform to the temporal landscape of created existence. Because of this radical conformity, grace itself adheres to a type of mathematical logic, as the soul of the mystic is “made sufficient at the fulle to comprehende al Him by love.”¹¹¹ This sufficiency is a plenitude, a filling-up, a mathematical whole, and, by definition, continual. At the same time, this mathematical logic of grace is “incomprehensible to alle create knowable might, as is aungel and mans soule.”¹¹²

The *Cloud*-author defines grace as incomprehensible to both angels and man by “theire knowyng and not by theire lovyng, and therfore I clepe hem in this caas knowable mightes),” but what does this mean?¹¹³ Created, knowable mights – both humans and angels – cannot comprehend the sufficiency of grace, and yet the human soul is able to comprehend God in love. Is this a contradiction?

When someone exists in one moment outside of the cloud of unknowing and then, in the next moment – in an infinitessimally small space of time – exists within the cloud, this is a quantum shift into the angelic register. However, what philosophy approaches by way of logic – angelic knowledge, and knowledge of what God is – the *Cloud*-author

¹¹¹ Ibid, ll 319.

¹¹² Ibid, ll 319-323.

¹¹³ Ibid, ll 319-323.

suggests is only possible by way of love, grace, and charity. Knowledge is a discrete operation, but love is a continuous one. This is a logic of charity that attempts to release the fundamental tension at the heart of the *Cloud*, the tension between knowing and loving, or between continuity and discontinuity.

But let us return again to another element of the *Cloud*-author's statement about knowledge and love. This is that angels, like humans, are "knowable mights."¹¹⁴ Is the *Cloud* positing a functional similarity between the human soul and the angelic intellect? "Alle resonable creatures, aungel and man," he says

hath in hem, ilchone by hemself, o principal worching might, the whiche is clepid a knowable might, and another principal worching might, the whiche is clepid a lovyng might: of the whiche two mightes, to the first, the whiche is a knowyng might, God, That is the maker of hem, is evermore incomprehensible; and to the secound, the whiche is the lovyng myght, in ilchone diversly He is al comprehensible at the fulle, insomochel that o lovyng soule only in itself, by vertewe of love, schuld comprehende in it Hym that is sufficient at the fulle.¹¹⁵

Though angels communicate through their mental faculties and the *verbum mentis*, though their intellect is separate from material being, and though humans may reach a

¹¹⁴ Or, as Aquinas calls them, "separate substances." This indicates the idea that, like God, angels are dependent for their identity not on their relationship to matter – their bodies are not made of matter at all – but instead, are dependent on something "separate" from matter: the degree to which their existence is realized compared to their essence. For a discussion of Angels in Aquinas' thought, particularly with a reference to Robert Kilwardby and Albertus Magnus, see Doolan, Gregory T. "Aquinas on the Demonstrability of Angels." in *A Companion to Angels in medieval Philosophy*, Ed. Tobias Hoffmann (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 13-44.

¹¹⁵ Gallacher, Patrick J, Ed. *The Cloud of Uknowing*. (Kalamazoo: TEAMS, 1997), ll. 324-335. The *Middle English Dictionary* includes a number of examples for "sufficient" and its relative, "sufficience," both of which suggest a legal or logical connotation, "That which suffices, all that is necessary;" "an adequate supply;" or "abundance, plenty, wealth," as well as the "ability, capability, capacity" to do something, or "self-sufficiency" and, with the meaning "self-sufficient," "adequate." or "*ad plenum satis*" (sufficient at the full). See "sufficient" in *The Middle English Dictionary*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2001).

similar type of knowledge of heaven through formal analysis, the final drawing upward of the human soul only comes about through the inexplicable tractor-beam of suffusing love. What angels do naturally and unquantifiably, humans cannot accomplish in their own, quantified time.

The *Cloud*-author makes an argument for the anthropocentric quantifiability of the rational universe: in the created order and when human actions are concerned, God operates according to principles of nature which include numerosity and arithmetical logics. However, the mystic experiences God in a way that divorces him from the atomizable world: love exists beyond quanta, and beyond comprehension.¹¹⁶ The *Cloud*-author repeats the phrase “sufficient at the fulle” to articulate the plenitude – or lack of quantifiability – of the loving might and its existence in God. This loving in turn creates a fullness that is incomparable to all other forms of quantifiable completion. If one were to speak in mathematical terms, it would be literally irrational: the state of mind that allows a human angelic access to God is incapable of being written as a numerical ratio.

This moment is important. It is also musical, as the *Cloud* describes this state of plenitudinous love in terms reminiscent of iterable chant. “Yif thee list have this entent lappid and foulden in o worde,” he says, it should be a word of “o silable,” such as the word God, or the word love. “Cheese thee whether thou wilt, or another as thee list: whiche that thee liketh best of o silable. And fasten this worde to thin herte, so that it never go thens for thing that bifalleth.”¹¹⁷ No matter what the temporal divisions of lived

¹¹⁶ This is exactly what we will see, or what readers of Rolle’s Latin works *had seen*, in his *Melos Amoris*.

¹¹⁷ Gallacher, Patrick J, Ed. *The Cloud of Uknowing*. (Kalamazoo: TEAMS, 1997), II. 499-504.

existence might bring, the unisyllabic, indivisible, sufficient word of the “loving might” remains. It is able “to fille alle the soules and aungelles that ever may be.”¹¹⁸

The *Cloud*’s understanding of language, particularly heavenly language, is linked to its understanding of time. And when the quanta of life are juxtaposed with continuous sound, this harmony – or perhaps this tension – produces the effect of *musica celestis*.¹¹⁹ Here, the atomist analysis of temporality and analytical interiority congeal *with* ecstatic performance as the “werk of the spirite,” or the operation of God in the soul. When the *Cloud* recommends that its readers say prayers like “Out!” or “Fire!” or “Jesu,” the single word of meditation is meant to connect the lover to the cloud of forgetting out of time, just like the “athomus” in which the work of the spirit occurs.¹²⁰ The mystic represents his openness to mystical experience as the word “hole, and not broken ne undone;”¹²¹ the smallest moment of time complete in its simplicity, like God:

¹¹⁸ Ibid, l. 335.

¹¹⁹ Johnson, Eleanor. “Feeling time, will, and words: vernacular devotion in *The Cloud of Unknowing*.” *JMEMS* 41:2 (2011) : 345-368; Baker, Denise N. “Julian of Norwich and the varieties of Middle English mystical discourse.” in *A Companion to Julian of Norwich*, Ed. Liz Herbert McAvoy, (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2008), pp. 53-63; Spearing, A.C. “Language and its limits: *The Cloud of Unknowing* and *Pearl*” in *Approaching medieval English Anchoritic and Mystical Texts*, Ed. Dee Dyas, Valerie Edden, and Roger Ellis. (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005), pp. 75-86; and Myles, Robert. “‘This litil worde “is”’: the existential metaphysics of the *Cloud*-author.” *Florilegium: Carleton University Annual Papers on Classical Antiquity and the Middle Ages* 8 (1986): 140-168.

¹²⁰ We will see these short outbursts again in Carthusian mysticism of the late 15th and early 16th century.

¹²¹ Gallacher, Patrick J, Ed. *The Cloud of Unknowing*. (Kalamazoo: TEAMS, 1997), l. 511. Rolle’s *Melos Amoris* presents us with discussions about the import of the unbroken or continual praise of God, and the ways in which angelic song is similarly unbroken. “*Factum est cor meum sicut cera liquescens in medio ventris mei* (Ps. xxii.14) [...] *Siquidem, ut cera excipit estum, sic subito solutum in summa secreta sentit se succesnsum, sonans in cithara, usque in celum sanctissime sublatum. Et quidem in corpore constans et castus currit in choreas continue canentes, ac intrans in aulam epulis*

Sikirly for it is preyed with a fulle spirite, in the height and in the depnes, in the lengthe and in the breed of his spirit that preieth it. In the height it is, for it is with al the might of the spirit. In the depnes it is, for in this lityl silable ben contyned alle the wittis of the spirit. In the lengthe it is, for might it ever fele as it felith, ever wolde it crie as it crieth. In the brede it is, for it wilnith the same to alle other that it wilnith to itself. In this tyme it is that a soule hath comprehendid, after the lesson of Seynte Poule, with alle seyntes – not fully bot in maner and in partye, as it is acordyng unto this werk – whiche is the lengthe and the breed, the height and the depnes of Everlastyng and Allovly, Almighty and Alle-witty God. The everlastyngnes of God is His lengthe; His love is His breed; His might is His height; and His wisdam is His depnes.¹²²

This is why this particular form of prayer is efficacious: the soul formulates itself, through a non-dimensional point of time, into an image and likeness of God:

No wonder thof a soule, that is thus nigh confourmyd bi grace to the ymage and the lices of God, his maker, be sone herde of God. Ye, thof it be a ful synful soule – the whiche is to God as it were an enmye – and it might thorow grace com to for to crye soche a lityl silable in the height and the depnes, the lengthe and the breed of his spirit, yit he scholde for the hidous noise of this crye be alweis herde and holpen of God.¹²³

Here is the irrationality of the spirit – the dimensional markers of reality have been collapsed into a single non-spatiotemporal point – and in a sense unmoored from any possibility for a Platonic ideal of verbal meaning, for “tyme, stede, and body, thees thre schuld be forgeten in alle goostly worching.”¹²⁴ Instead, the entirety of their meaning is

habundat ardentem aspirans ad altum Amatum.” See Arnould, E.J.F, Ed. *The Melos Amoris of Richard Rolle of Hampole*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977), p. 45, ll. 11, 16-21.

¹²² Gallacher, Patrick J, Ed. *The Cloud of Uknowing*. (Kalamazoo: TEAMS, 1997), ll 1386-1401. This whole chapter begins from Ephesians. 3:17-19, and follows the development of Bernard of Clairvaux, *De Consideratione*, V.xiii: "That one thing is length because of eternity, breadth because of charity, sublimity because of majesty, depth because of wisdom." This passage occurs also in Hilton, *Scale of Perfection*, I.13. See Louth, Andrew. *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), p. 145, where he points out that for Augustine, continence is itself "a single-minded devotion to God."

¹²³ Gallacher, Patrick J, Ed. *The Cloud of Uknowing*. (Kalamazoo: TEAMS, 1997), ll 1386-1401.

¹²⁴ Ibid, ll. 2089-90.

constructed out of the formation of a word. “This goostly crie,” moreover, is better said interiorly than with the exterior lips, “betyr lernid of God by the proef then of any man by worde. For it is best whan it is in pure spirit,”

withoutyn specyal thought or any pronounsing of worde; bot yif it be any seeldom tyme, when for habundaunce of spiryt it brestith up into worde, so that the body and the soule ben bothe fillid with sorow and kumbryng of synne.¹²⁵

In fact, the most appropriate words for moments of ecstasy include no words at all. Like Hilton’s angelic thought, they are totally divorced from the matter of language as commonly understood (that is, as the physical formation of words said aloud). Instead, these are stirrings of the soul, lacking external sensory input or even any temporal existence.

Because they come from within, because they are disconnected from the “athomus” of time for which the contemplative must account, these interior syllables need not be subjected to *discretio spirituum*, like “alle other counfortes, sounes, and gladnes, and swetnes that comyn fro withoute sodenly.”¹²⁶ If sense-pereptible things touch the mystic – and these must also include verbal articulations – the devout should “welcome hem; bot lene not to moche on hem for ferde of febelnes; for it wol take ful mochel of thi myghtes to bide any longe tyme in soche swete felynge and wepynges.”¹²⁷

It is this potential for weakness, and this alone, that differentiates men and angels, and, in turn, keeps the contemplative from tuning in to angelic song. “Alle aungelles and alle soules,” he says,

¹²⁵ Ibid, ll. 1454-1460.

¹²⁶ Ibid, 1698-1707)

¹²⁷ Ibid, ll. 1745-1747.

thof al thei be conformed and adownid with grace and with vertewes, for
the whiche thei ben aboven thee in clennes, nevertheles yit thei ben bot
even with thee in kynde[...] Aboven thiself in kynde is no maner of thing
bot only God.”¹²⁸

The difference between men and angels is accidental rather than essential; being drawn into angelic song – that is, if it exists for the *Cloud* – is not one of rupture or of ecstasy. Human minds and angelic minds operate similarly, and come into divine speech through the same conversion from “knowable” might to “loving” might. This is, however, a type of language that exists “withoutyn special thought or any pronounsing of worde.”

Richard Rolle’s *canor*

Hilton and the *Cloud*-author critique Rolle from an intellectual world that imagined angelic existence and action in an exacting way. For them, communication between angels and humans – whether in song, prayer, or speech – was determined by the differences between angelic intellect and human “psychology” (this is only what we might call it today, but what the medieval thinker would have understood as a number of functions: appetite, imagination, intellect, spirit, or substantial form). For Hilton, the human mind is fundamentally incapable of communicating with angels, whose psychological makeup is incompatible with the human. In this way, Hilton aligns himself with a Thomist understanding of angelic speech. Take, for instance, Aquinas’ *Summa Theologica*, where he compares the knowledge the human mind has of itself to the knowledge it has of angels. Here, he concludes that humans can only know angels imperfectly:

¹²⁸ Ibid, ll. 2161-6.

Augustine says (De Trin. ix, 3), "our mind acquires the knowledge of incorporeal things by itself" – i.e. by knowing itself. Therefore from the knowledge which the separated soul has of itself, we can judge how it knows other separate things. Now it was said above, that as long as it is united to the body the soul understands by turning to phantasms, and therefore it does not understand itself save through becoming actually intelligent by means of ideas abstracted from phantasms; for thus it understands itself through its own act, as shown above. When, however, it is separated from the body, it understands no longer by turning to phantasms, but by turning to simply intelligible objects; hence in that state it understands itself through itself. Now, every separate substance "understands what is above itself and what is below itself, according to the mode of its substance" (*De Causis viii*): for a thing is understood according as it is in the one who understands; while one thing is in another according to the nature of that in which it is. And the mode of existence of a separated soul is inferior to that of an angel, but is the same as that of other separated souls. Therefore the soul apart from the body has perfect knowledge of other separated souls, but it has an imperfect and defective knowledge of the angels so far as its natural knowledge is concerned. But the knowledge of glory is otherwise.¹²⁹

Something can be known of angels in the realm of being, but their substance, matter, and the properties of their mental activity always remain partially hidden from us, even when heaven itself is not. This ignorance includes angels' song.

¹²⁹ ST I.89.a.2: Augustinus dicit in IX de Trin., mens nostra cognitionem rerum incorporearum per seipsam accipit, idest cognoscendo seipsam, sicut supra dictum est. Per hoc ergo quod anima separata cognoscit seipsam, accipere possumus qualiter cognoscit alias substantias separatas. Dictum est autem quod quandiu anima corpori est unita, intelligit convertendo se ad phantasmata. Et ideo nec seipsam potest intelligere nisi in quantum fit actu intelligens per speciem a phantasmatibus abstractam, sic enim per actum suum intelligit seipsam, ut supra dictum est. Sed cum fuerit a corpore separata, intelliget non convertendo se ad phantasmata, sed ad ea quae sunt secundum se intelligibilia, unde seipsam per seipsam intelliget. Est autem commune omni substantiae separatae quod intelligat id quod est supra se, et id quod est infra se, per modum suae substantiae, sic enim intelligitur aliquid secundum quod est in intelligente; est autem aliquid in altero per modum eius in quo est. Modus autem substantiae animae separatae est infra modum substantiae angelicae, sed est conformis modo aliarum animarum separatarum. Et ideo de aliis animabus separatis perfectam cognitionem habet; de Angelis autem imperfectam et deficientem, loquendo de cognitione naturali animae separatae. De cognitione autem gloriae est alia ratio.

The *Cloud*-author's view of human and angelic mental faculties finds more similarities than dissimilarities. However, the power of the human mind to hear, express, or tune into angelic or heavenly song requires a faculty – the loving might – that is divorced from normal sense experience and only given by God's grace. It does not deny the presence of the human body, but instead rejects it as unimportant for an experience of *canor*. As we will see, Rolle's view of the human psyche, and in turn, of the human psyche's ability to appreciate *musica celestis*, is entirely different.

How might Rolle have responded to the accusations levied against him by the *Cloud*-author and by Walter Hilton in regards to *musica celestis*? First of all, Rolle's Latin work – particularly the *Melos Amoris* – shows a remarkable attentiveness to the metaphysical properties of *canor* and to the necessity to understand angelic song as intellectual. It is his articulation of his experience, rather than the experience itself, that differentiates him from Hilton and the *Cloud*-author: Rolle partially rejects the analytical language of the mind in the moment of experience, while engaging with the metaphysical and philosophical claims of *musica celestis* during reflection on this experience. Though his lack of scholastic training often meant Rolle was without a recognizable philosophical vocabulary with which to make these distinctions, his Latin works nonetheless show an attentiveness to nuanced metaphysicalities and communal subjectivities.

And, while Katherine Zieman and others are not incorrect in their assessment of Hilton and the *Cloud*'s assessment of Rolle's English works (and even in his Latin *oeuvre*): there is a strong relationship between corporeality – dining, tasting, sweetness, a burning flame, song – and spirituality. However, Rolle's Latin writing shows just how cursorily Hilton and the *Cloud*-author read Rolle's connection to a nuanced critique of

language and of metaphysics, as well as how unwilling they were to understand his philosophical idelect, which is one that embraces many of the ideas of thirteen- and fourteenth-century skeptics while not conforming to their discursive argot. Quite simply, Rolle's Latin theology of *canor* addresses critiques levied against it by Hilton and the *Cloud*.

In addition to this, Rolle's Latin works present an understanding of angels' song that actually does align (at least somewhat) with these two later authors; it is his vernacular mysticism and its cultic followers that are most problematic to Hilton and the *Cloud*. However, neither of these writers seems to have read Rolle's Latin texts with enough depth to understand the bifurcation between Rolle's Latin *logos* and his vernacular *ethos*, which is essentially a differentiation between experience of angels' song and its critical deconstruction.¹³⁰ Take the *Contra Amatores Mundi*, for example:

All earthly melody (*melodia mundialis*), all corporeal music of instruments (*corporalis musica instrumentis*) or mechanical organs (*organicis mechanica*), insofar as the actives or secular men please the impatient with them, the contemplative, truly, does not desire these things. No indeed, he flees from corporeal sound (*corporalem sonitum*), because contemplative men have in themselves the sound of the heavens (*sonum celestem*).¹³¹

Rolle's language here is nuanced, and although it does not use the terminology of Boethian hierarchies of sound that appear throughout medieval music theory, it engages with the same general ideas. This passage – though referring throughout to instrumental

¹³⁰ This was a common problem for English authors and commentators of the late medieval period, even including William Langland. For more on this, see Chapter Three.

¹³¹ Rolle, Richard. *The Contra amatores mundi of Richard Rolle of Hampole*, Ed. Paul F. Theiner. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), p. 80: *Omnis melodia mundialis, omnisque corporalis musica instrumentis organicis machinata, quantumcumque activis seu secularibus viris negociis implicatis placuerint, contemplativis vero desiderabilia non erunt. Immo fugiunt corporalem audire sonitum, quia in se contemplativi viri iam sonum susceperunt celestem.*

music, music that can be heard by the body – gestures to the three types of music understood by the medieval world: *musica mundana*, *musica humana*, and *musica instrumentalis*. Mechanical music, earthly music, and embodied music are all corporeal; the contemplative, on the other hand, collapses these three earthly musics in order to surpass them for a type of music that the mystic already knows: the *sonum celestem*, a song within his heart that is identical to that found in heaven. Angelic song is located in the heart of the mystic.

Rolle's *Emendatio Vitae* reiterates this point: that *sonum celestem*, or *canor*, is a pre-existing condition, a structure of the heart itself, ready to turn prayer to song:

Thus this marvelous affluence of God's goodness is perfected in us, for from the deepest essence of our heart the love of God rises up, and all of our our prayers along with our affect will be effected.¹³²

These prayers look almost exactly like those espoused by the *Cloud of Unknowing*. They do not “rush out in words,” but are instead “turned into things like syllables, with a strong clamor and an incensed desire...they have been turned into *iubilus*,” a phatic song disconnected from any verbal signification.¹³³ This reference also suggests a connection to the *iubilus* of Augustine; in Augustine's *De musica*, the numerical proportionality of the heavens is a specular example of the relationship between humans and a well-ordered,

¹³² Rolle, Richard. *Emendatio Vitae; Orationes ad Honorem Nominis Ihesu*. Edited from Cambridge University Library MSS Dd.v.64 and Kk.vi.20 by Nicholas Watson. (Toronto: Centre for medieval Studies, 1995), p. 50-: *Sic profecto in nobis mira affluencia bonitatis diuine inuenitur, quia ex intimis medullis cordis nostri exurget amore Dei, et tota oracio nostra cum affectu et effectu erit.*

¹³³ Ibid, p. 50-1: The full quotation reads, “*Ut iam non uerba in oracione transcurramus, sed omnes eciam pene sillabas, cum clamore valido et desiderio incenso. Deo nostro offeremus. Incenso enim corde nostro amore feruido, eciam oracio ipsa incenditur, et in odorem suauitatis ex ore nostro in conspectu Dei adoletur, vt magna iocunditas sit orare, quia dum in oracione ineffabilis dulcor oranti infunditur, ipsa oracio in iubilum commutatur.*”

divinely-inspired life.¹³⁴ What Rolle is saying, though, goes beyond the mathematical basis of *musica humana* and even the ethical practice that Augustine championed in his discussion of music. The explosive moments of Rolle's *iubilus* are the expression of a soul escaping the body, and of a soul directly connected to the intellectual song of angelic being. It is not *musica humana*. It is *musica celestis*, a "song poured out from heaven."¹³⁵

Rolle abides in *canor* because it is continuous – a characteristic that distinguishes it from *musica mundana* – and towards a type of music that abjures, like Hilton's or the *Cloud*'s song, the corporeal impressions and phantoms of sense-perception:

Active men may sing in exterior praise, but we contemplatives rise to heaven above the earth in the sound of celestial dining[...] And this is why we are not able to abandon singing and to cease the flowing of this invisible praise, for we do not follow after the confused noises of the body, because truly no one is able to praise God in love if he has not left the empty solaces of the world behind.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Rolle may be referring here, specifically, to the Augustinian concept of *iubilus*, which claims a type of amusicality for medieval music. See Boenig, Robert. "St Augustine's *Jubilus* and Richard Rolle's *Canor*." *Vox Mystica: Essays in Honor of Valerie M. Lagorio* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1995), pp. 75-86; also Augustine on music in Jacobsson, Martin. "*Aurelius Augustinus, De musica liber VI: a critical edition with a translation and an introduction*," PhD dissertation. (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 2002); Brennan, Brian, "Augustine's *De musica*." *Vigiliae Christianae*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (Sep. 1988): 267-91.

¹³⁵ Rolle, Richard. *Emendatio Vitae; Orationes ad Honorem Nominis Ihesu*. Edited from Cambridge University Library MSS Dd.v.64 and Kk.vi.20, Nicholas Watson, Ed (Toronto: Centre for medieval Studies, 1995), p. 56: *Ex cordis mundicia surgit cantus glorie, carmen dulcissonum et gaudium amenum. Tunc plerumque tam ineffabilis iocunditas datur a Deo quod etiam melos celicum infunditur.*

¹³⁶ Rolle, Richard. *The Contra amatores mundi of Richard Rolle of Hampole*, Ed. Paul F. Theiner. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968, p. 80: *Activi vero in exterioribus gaudent canticis, nos contemplacione divina succensi in sono epulantis terrena transvolamus[...] Alioquin iam desinimus canere, atque ab illa invisibilis gaudii affluencia cessare, ut dum ab illis corporaliter perstrepentibus non fugimus, veraciter discamus quia nemo unquam in amore Dei gaudere potuit, qui prius vana istius mundi solacia non dereliquit.*

This continuity replaces the physical body with a sonic one:

Thus the mouth of of the one who fervently loves Christ will be filled with laughter, while the lips from which praise flows forth will be expanded into the song of the divine jubilus. In this way they are satiated by most holy delight, and the chosen friend of God is enveloped in his secret hiding place by brightness of the sempiternal light and all of his fleshly heat is overshadowed by the burning of the Holy Spirit; and the man who lingers in the world will be given the relief of the sweet mellifluous heavenly fervor.¹³⁷

Rolle is close to apophaticism here, and to philosophy. To be “dilated” (*dilantur*) and “filled” (*replebitur*) with this sound suggests the plenitude of the *Cloud of Unknowing* when it calls the loving might of God “sufficient at the fulle” to reform the sinner.¹³⁸ The mystic locates himself in the indivisible light of God through music by entering into the space of his heart, which is aural, and which flows out in melismatic tunes in the moment of ecstasy; the psyche of the human being is song. “The moderated mind changes to melody... as the heart is converted into charity.”¹³⁹ This identity allows Rolle to turn all human interaction into a meditative moment of solitary contemplation. “I do not know how to be silent,” Rolle says, of his *iubilus* in *caritas*, so that even he is surrounded by

¹³⁷ Ibid, p. 80, ll 9-16: *Unde et os tanti et tam ferventis amatoris Christi risu replebitur, dum labia laudiflua usque in canorum iubulum divinitus dilatantur. In huiusmodi ergo sanctissime dileccionis sacietate, electa Dei amica in latibulis secretorum suorum fulgoribus sempiterni luminis involvitur et ab omni carnalitatis estu ardoribus Spiritus Sancti optime obumbratur; ut viro adhuc mundo moranti celitus inspiratus fervor mellifluus suave nimirum largiatur refrigerium.*

¹³⁸ See above, page 29-30.

¹³⁹ Arnould, E.J.F., Ed. *The Melos Amoris of Richard Rolle of Hampole*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977), pp. 43 ll.12-3: *Mens moderata in melodiam mutetur[...] et cor in charitate cremans convertitur in cantum ut canat quotidie carmen Conditore.* As the chief of Christian virtues and the love of God in Himself and for Himself alone, *canor* has the power to turn the gross material heart into a beatific function.

ill-wishers, he is “taken in by the sound of a heavenly sign[...] and subsists in solitary sitting, singing lustily and jubilating earnestly.”¹⁴⁰

Elsewhere Rolle will remark on the ineffability of such experience, stressing that he does not “know how to express,” Rolle says, “how much delight this sweet divinity provides,” for the *iubilus* is “continual,” constantly generative, rapturing the mind into heaven.¹⁴¹ Here, he experiences angelic speech:

Behold, I have entered into the eternal *iubilus*. This miraculous melody remains in my mind, and my ears uncover the angelic amen and the song of songs is taken into my heart.¹⁴²

The entry into the eternal *jubilus* is a song that remains in the psyche of the lover despite the fact that it is merely a memory. Once a human being has attained a certain amount of knowledge, that knowledge is *always* present to him. In other words, here, Rolle suggests that the experience of *canor* or *musica celestis* leaves a mystic with a type of continually active knowledge of this very song. Rather than knowing something *in potentia* – which is how humans know most things – the mystic comes away from an experience of *canor* with the ability, like angels, to be in perpetual, actual, angelic knowledge of heaven. The mystic is *always* present, and always perpetually capable. Although Rolle’s expression of *musica celestis* differs from Hilton and the *Cloud-*

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 4 ll. 29- 5 l.3: *Silere non scio: sic charitas me cogit, ut cuncti cognoscant quia capax consisto cantabilis clamoris et sonum suscipio celicum insignem, dum discedere dilexa a divitum dolore et sancte subsistere solitarie sedendo, canens et calidus ac iubilans ingenter.*

¹⁴¹ Ibid, p. 101 ll. 1-7: *Nescio narrare quantum dulcessit dileccio divina: iugum est iubilus, et onus opimum est habitus et alitus optati amoris; amenitas amantis omnem intellectum humanum excedit, nam sensus non sufficit liquide hoc loqui; quamvis in sublimibus sistat secretis, conatur et labitur: exprimere non potest gloriam Dilecti dum capitur in canticum et germinat ingenter in genere iubileo.*

¹⁴² Ibid, p. 49, ll. 21-28: *Ecce eternus iubilus ingeritur. Melos mirabile manet in mente; aures ascultant angelicum amenum ac carmen canorum concipitur in corde.*

author's scholastically-inflected descriptions of the same, it is not because he is not suspicious of sense-impressions, nor because he is overly simplistic in his engagement with apophaticism.

Rather, for Rolle, *canor* is a continual, hierophanic outpouring that turns the mental, spiritual, or “psychological” makeup of the mystic into song itself; it then draws the mystic, through the phatic expression of the *iubilus*, away from mundane, material music. The final action of *canor* allows the mystic to remain in a constant musical relationship to both God and man, no matter what the actions of the outside world upon him, as his being is the resonant space of *canor* itself. *Canor* (or the *iubilus* or *musica celestis*) separates mind from body, removing the mundane restrictions that typically constrain human intellection (such as images, phantasms, or temporal divisions). This includes the articulation of particular words, and the mystic begins to speak, quite literally, another language – an angelic one – that is located in the heart. As he says in the *Incendium Amoris*, “he who experiences this has experienced angelic song, for it is the same here and in heaven.”¹⁴³

Rolle says, those who are perfected by *canor*

For this reason the best will be crowned among the chorus singers singing the song of songs face-to-face with the Creator, and will be accepted as equals with the angels with honor, because they have loved burningly without corruption of the flesh.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Deansley, Margaret, Ed. *Incendium Amoris of Richard Rolle of Hampole*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1915), p. 236. *Est enim angelica suavitas quam in animam accipit et eadem oda, etsi non eisdem verbis laudes Deo resonabitur. Qualis angelorum, talis est iscius concentus, etsi non tantus, nec tam perspicuus, propter carnem corruptibilem que adhuc aggravat amantem. Qui hoc experitur eciam angelica cantica expertus est, cum sit eiusdem speciei in via et in patria.*

¹⁴⁴ Arnould, E.J.F, Ed. *The Melos Amoris of Richard Rolle of Hampole*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977), pp. 27-8, ll 36, 1-6: *Quamobrem clarissime coronabuntur inter choros*

As he does so, the mystic enters into the choral “body” of the angels.

For this is angelic sweetness which he admits into his spirit, and it is the same song, even though it does not resound with the same words of praise to God. As it is with angels, so it is with this harmony: even if it is not so great, it is still evident, because the flesh is corruptible, and this aggrieves the lover. And yet he who experiences this has experienced angelic song, for it is the same here and in heaven.¹⁴⁵

Rolle understands the communication of angels – and the *perfecti* – as pre-verbal, or perhaps *beyond* speech. Watson says of this passage that Rolle believes that the “mature contemplative is already *in patria*,” though this is only termed a “higher form of ecstasy,” but what this passage also suggests is that Rolle has developed his own logic of the psyche.¹⁴⁶

Hilton *et alia* can say what they will about Rolle’s vernacular spirituality; his English writings seeded a cult that appears to have included a number of “metaphysical” practical errors. And yet, here, in Rolle’s Latin work one finds a set of spiritual experiences that are philosophically nuanced, concerned with deep problems of language and earnest attempts to suss out the operations of the mind beyond the confines of the body.¹⁴⁷ “Actives,” says Rolle, “exult with exterior organs,”

concinencium cantica canticorum coram Creatore, atque honorifice assumentur ad equalitatem angelorum quia sine corrupcione carnis tam ardenter amaverunt.

¹⁴⁵ Deansley, Margaret, Ed. *Incendium Amoris of Richard Rolle of Hampole*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1915), p. 237. *Est enim angelica suavitas quam in animam accipit et eadem oda, etsi non eisdem verbis laudes Deo resonabitur. Qualis angelorum, talis est iscius concentus, etsi non tantus, nec tam perspicuus, propter carnem corruptibilem que adhuc aggravat amantem. Qui hoc experitur eciam angelica cantica expertus est, cum sit eiusdem speciei in via et in patria.*

¹⁴⁶ Watson, Nicholas. *Richard Rolle and the Invention of Authority*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 72.

¹⁴⁷ This can be seen in other quotations, as well. Rolle refers in the *Melos Amoris* and elsewhere to the importance of the inner ears. For example: “A clear breath of the spirit of the weary exhalation to the perpetual species, the living voice might proclaim that

But we, in contemplation, fly across the earth to the sound of dining in the sweetness of the creator. [The worldly] do not know our praise; nor can we neume it, because between us the most delicious, divine sound we sing in a sound of divine jubilation, and we are set apart from all others through the psalms we sing; we desire to be segregated in our speech.¹⁴⁸

Rolle has *lived experience* of the song of angels, an experience that suggests that the heart of the mystic is totally incomprehensible to others. It is made of and speaks in *neumes* or music rather than, like worldly men, images or verbal language.

From Hilton and the *Cloud*-author's perspective, on the other hand, all sense-experience eventually turns away from experience to the legibility or plausibility of this experience, and its ability to be described in language: to its abstraction and intellection. Improperly interpreting mystical experience after the fact is to have improperly experienced the divine, and Hilton and the *Cloud*-author, with their scholastic formulations of angelic communications, did not believe angels communicated through physical, auditory means.

Rolle would probably scoff at both of these criticisms: *dulcor*, *fervor*, and *canor* was not made valid by its subsequent legibility or incorporation into extant theological frameworks. Rather, the mystic experiences these forms of embodied rapture in order to

which is intoned in the orb of the world in the ear of the lover, which is made evident by inward ears, though the happiness of searching through scripture hides from the deceitful." *Languentis limpide spiritus spirati ad speciem perhennem vox vitalis in aura amoris auribus intrinsecus perspicue proclamat que intonat in orbe terrarum, quamquam lubricos lateat leticia scrutinii Scripture*. See Arnould, E.J.F, Ed. *The Melos Amoris of Richard Rolle of Hampole*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977), p. 5 ll 4-7. In this, we see that there is actually capacity in Rolle to think about "spiritual" versus corporeal meditation on the angelic realm. He is not purely about sense-experience, whatever that might mean, but instead has room for intellectual experience of heaven.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 146, ll. 29-38 – 147, ll. 1-6: *Activi in exterioribus exultant organis. Nos contemplacione Creatoris succensi suaviter in sono epulantis terrena transvolamus. Illi nostrum nesciunt gaudium; nos illorum neupma nequimus, quia, dum intra nos delicias divinas sonora voce iubilantes canimus, ab omnibus profecto psallentibus et loquentibus cupimus segregari.*

present readers with the uncomfortable rifts between body and legibility, where philosophical frameworks fall catastrophically short of describing God. For Rolle, the *via negativa* has the wrong object: it *thinks* it is critiquing the human ability to describe God (as always falling short) and therefore more completely describing the essence of God, but what it is really doing is pointing out logical insolubilia about language's relationship to logic and to itself. Rolle gets around both the *via negativa* and the *via positiva* simply by existing and experiencing the impossible: the song of angels, already present in the ears of the elect.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ See Lenz, Martin. "Why Can't Angels Think Properly? Ockham against Chatton and Aquinas." in *Angels in medieval Philosophical Inquiry: Their Function and Significance*. Iribarren, Isabel and Martin Lenz, Eds. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 155-168.

CHAPTER TWO

Liturgical Appropriations, Part 1: Carthusian Mystical Diaries

Near the end of his *Refectorium Salutis*, the final text in a series of three mystical treatises found in Trinity College, Cambridge, MS O.2.56, Richard Methley (1450/1-1527/8), brother of the Carthusian Charterhouse of Mount Grace, does a bit of name-dropping.¹⁵⁰

When I had finished the mass, I grew more and more weak, because I was so totally affected by languor that my whole life consisted in love, languor, sweetness, fervor, song, and, what was even more rare, a sensible fervor which my love had promised me; and I often languished, just like the dear Richard of Hampole who was also frequently in such a passion.¹⁵¹

Methley's explicit reference to Rolle ends a series of mystical experiences patterned after Rolle's. For Methley, as for Rolle, *excessus mentis* was about experience, and his narration often lapses into the alliterative prosopoetics familiar to all students of the Rollean canon.¹⁵² But what is even more interesting about this reference is not that

¹⁵⁰ Mount Grace (1389) was one of the few monastic establishments founded between the Black Death and the Reformation. What is particularly interesting about this is the fact that the few others that were founded also end up using Rolle extensively in their libraries and in their understanding of religious experience.

¹⁵¹ Trinity, MS O.2.56, fol 55v-6r: *Cumque missam finissem, iterum atque iterum defeci totus languidus effectus nam vita mea consistit in amore languore dulcore feruore, canore, rarius tamen in sensibili feruore quia dilectus michi promisit quod frequencius in languore sicut et ille almus Ricardus dictus de hampol frequencius in calore.*

¹⁵² Modern critics have engaged in sustained, if not exhaustive, comparisons of Methley and Rolle, which I will only gesture to here for reasons of space. These include, most recently, including Laura Saetvit Miles, Karma Lochrie, Katherine Zieman, and Katherine Kerby-Fulton. See Hogg, James. *Mount Grace Charterhouse and late medieval English Spirituality, Analecta Cartusiana*, 82:3. (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1980): 1-43; Sargent, Michael. "Methley, Richard (1450/51-1527/8)." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. Colin Matthew, Brian Harrison, Lawrence Goldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004-12); Zieman, Katherine, Katherine Kerby-Fulton, Karma Lochrie, and James Hogg, ed. "The Dormitorium Dilecti Dilecti" of Richard Methley of Mount Grace Charterhouse," in *Kartäusermystik und –Mystiker*, *Analecta Cartusiana*, 55:2 (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1981);

Methley chose to name Rolle as an authority on his own *languor*, *dulcor*, *fervor*, and *canor*, but, instead, that he waited so long to do so. After six years of musical ecstasy, desire, and rumination, and after fifty-five folios of Latin prose, Methley presents his readers with the unnamed base-text for his experience and, indeed, his book: the friendly, nourishing figure of “*almus*” brother Rolle, the inspiration and the director of visions that had inspired his diary. Methley allows Rolle into his work only after articulating, both for himself and for his readership, what *canor* meant in a specifically Carthusian context. This tactical deployment of Rolle’s name gives rise to a number of questions: who were Methley’s readers? What sort of Rollean awareness did he expect them to bring with

Lochrie, Karma. *Margery Kempe and Translations of the Flesh*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), especially pp. 203-236. Diplomatic transcriptions of each treatise in the Trinity manuscript have appeared as follows: Hogg, James, Ed., “The ‘*Scola Amoris Languidi*’ of Richard Methley of Mount Grace Charterhouse,” in *Kartäusermystik und -Mystiker*, *Analecta Cartusiana*, 55:2, (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1981), pp. 138–65; Hogg, ed., “The ‘Dormitorium,’” in *Kartäusermystik und -Mystiker*, *Analecta Cartusiana*, vol. 55:2 (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1981); Hogg, ed., “Richard Methley: A Mystical Diary: The ‘Refectorium Salutis,’” in *Kartäusermystik und -Mystiker*, *Analecta Cartusiana*, 55:1 (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1981), pp. 208–38; London, Public Record Office, MS SP I/239 is diplomatically transcribed in Sargent, Michael G., ed., “Self-Verification of Visionary Phenomena: Richard Methley’s *Experimentum Veritatis*,” in *Kartäusermystik und -Mystiker*, *Analecta Cartusiana*, vol. 55:2 ((Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1981), pp. 121–37. Both of Methley’s translations survive in Cambridge, Pembroke College, MS 221 and have been edited in Methley, Richard. *Divina Caligo Ignorancie: A Latin Glossed Version of “The Cloud of Unknowing,”* Clark John H.P., *Analecta Cartusiana*, 119:3 (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 2009); and Clark, John, ed. *Speculum Animarum Simplicium: A Glossed Latin Version of “The Mirror Simple Souls,”* 2 vols., *Analecta Cartusiana*, vol. 266 (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 2010). See also Miles, Laura Saetvit. “Richard Methley and the Translation of Vernacular Religious Writing into Latin,” in *After Arundel: Religious Writing in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. Vincent Gillespie and Kantik Ghosh. (Turnhout, Belg.: Brepols, 2011), pp. 449–67; Gillespie, Vincent, in “Haunted Text,” in *medieval Texts in Context*, Caie, Graham D. and Reveney, Denis Ed. (New York: Routledge, 288), pp. 138–9.

them into a reading of the *Refectorium*? How was *canor* expressed in this Carthusian production, and how did it differ from its Rollean subtext?

Richard Methley has received some scholarly attention, but what little attention he has been given is focused not on his original Latin works – found only in the manuscript discussed in this chapter – but to his translations of some of today’s best-known medieval mystical texts.¹⁵³ One of these is his translation of the *Cloud of Unknowing*, which has already been discussed as it relates to *canor* – the other is Marguerite Porete’s *Mirror of Simple Souls*.¹⁵⁴ Methley’s hand also appears in the margins of the *Boke of Margery Kempe* (British Library, Additional MS 61823), where he compares Kempe’s experiences to that of his spiritual brother, the Carthusian John Norton (who is the other focus of this chapter). When Methley entered Mountgrace Charterhouse in 1476, he was also entering an order with a strong tradition of mystical commentary and curatorship. Walter Hilton’s texts, Pseudo-Dionysius’ *Mystica theologia*, Hugh of Balma’s *Viae Syon Lugent*, Nicholas Love’s *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, Julian of Norwich’s

¹⁵³ Katherine Zieman’s work is one of the few exceptions, see her “Monasticism and the Public Contemplative in late medieval England: Richard Methley and his Spiritual Formation.” *JMEMS* 42:3, Fall 2012 (699-724).

¹⁵⁴ The extant translation of the *Cloud* and the *Mirror* were completed in 1509, after Methley and Norton wrote their treatises; this does not mean, of course, that Norton and Methley were not familiar with these texts before this period, of course, but it is important to note this chronological issue nonetheless. Of the four manuscripts that contain the entirety of Methley’s surviving works, there are no duplicated treatises. Each is a sole surviving copy. These are British Library, Add. MS 48965, no. 10 (an autograph letter to Henry, tenth Baron Clifford); National Archives of the United Kingdom, Public Record Office, London, SP I/239 (the *Experimentum Veritatis* and the English *Letter to Hugh Hermit, of solitary life*); Cambridge, Pembroke College, MS 221 (the Latin *Cloud of Unknowing* and a Latin translation of Marguerite Porete’s *Mirror of Simple Souls*); and Cambridge, Trinity College, MS O.2.56 (the *Scola Amoris Languidi*, the *Dormitorium Dilecti Dilecti*, and the *Refectorium salutis*).

Revelations of Divine Love, and Jan van Ruusbroec's *Van den Blinkenden Steyn* all circulated within and were preserved primarily by Carthusian libraries.¹⁵⁵

Scholars of late medieval Mysticism tend to be more interested in Richard Methley's *Hew Heremite*, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, and *The Mirror of Simple Souls* than they are in the original texts of the Trinity College manuscript. This probably has as much to do with contemporary accessibility as it does to their perceived relative scholarly and historical importance: *The Cloud of Unknowing* is one of the most beautiful of all mystical treatises in the apophatic vein, and Marguerite Porete's *Mirror* presents a case of misread identity along with its poetic negative theology – in England, the *Mirror* was thought to have been written by a Carthusian or male solitary – this makes it a fecund critical nexus for studies of gender construction in the medieval period. On the other hand, the *Scola Amoris Languidi*, *Dormitorium Dilecti Dilecti*, and *Refectorium Salutis* offer no such rewards. They are written in difficult Latin, only the *Refectorium* exists in anything like a modern edition, and, as far as anyone can tell, they seem never to have circulated, or been intended to circulate, beyond the walls of the Charterhouse.¹⁵⁶ Had

¹⁵⁵ Carthusian book-trading networks are important, as Carthusians took seriously the Hugonian injunction that Carthusians “pray with [their] hands.” Note the General Chapter of the Order, a meeting which was held yearly and that allows for us to trace Carthusian vocation and death as well as elections. See Sargent, Michael. “The Transmission by the English Carthusians of some late medieval Spiritual Writings,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 27 (1976): 225-40; as well as Cré, Marilyn. *Vernacular Mysticism in the Charterhouse: An Analysis of BL MS Additional 37790 in its Religious and Literary Context* (University of Fribourg Doctoral Dissertation, 2001) and Gillespie, Vincent, “Dial M for Mystic: Mystical texts in the library of Syon Abbey and the Spirituality of the Syon Brethren,” in Marion Glasscoe, Ed, *The English medieval Tradition in England, Wales and Ireland*, Exeter Symposium 7, (1999): 241-68.

¹⁵⁶ For a discussion that at least tangentially deals with this issue, see Miles as well as Zieman, but perhaps most importantly Gillespie, Vincent. “Women in the Charterhouse.” in Denis Renevey and Christiania Whitehead, eds. *Writing Religious Women: Female*

any one of these three variables been different: had Methley been a woman, had his Latin been a bit more normative, or had the Trinity manuscript glosses indicated its ownership by Syon or Barking Abbeys, we might be possessed of a critical bibliography ten lines long rather than two. But thinking of Methley's Carthusian productions as inherently hermetic denies a critical fact about the Carthusian order that is fundamentally untrue: that it was a wilderness religion, encircled with impenetrable walls, an order of solitaries without a sense of sociality. This is simply not the case.¹⁵⁷

Spiritual and Textual Practices in late medieval England. (Cardiff and Toronto: University of Wales Press and University of Toronto Press, 2000), pp. 43-62.

¹⁵⁷ The Carthusians continued to think of themselves as a wilderness religious, but as the Middle Ages went on, they increasingly built their monasteries in posh real estate: "deer parks, the edges of major towns, alongside major roads" (Coppack, 168) Coppack goes on to note that the first English foundation (Witham) was in a remote area of Somerset, in the forest of Selwood (1178/9), Hinton (1227) and Beauvale (1343) were in deer parks, London (1371), Coventry (1381), and Hull (1377) were suburban, and Axholme (1397/8) and Mount Grace (1398) were rural but not remote, while the final Charterhouse, Sheen (1414), was not only adjacent to Syon Abbey, but also to London. In addition to this, despite their small numbers – there were probably never more than 200 Carthusians in England at any point in time – as the 1400s wore on, lay burials in Carthusian institutions became more popular (though there were never many of them): Thomas Beaufort was granted sepulture in Mount Grace in 1417 (he was interred there in 1427), William de Authorp (1432), Thomas de Holand (1432), Thomas Lokwood (1436), Eleanor de Roos (1438), Joan Ingleby (1478) By 1460 the church was extended and from 1480 to 1538, there were a series of wills in which burials of devout laymen were requested of the space. For instance, in 1532, Sir Thomas Strangways of Harlsey Castle requested that he "be beriede at Mountgrace where as the Prior of the same house thynkes best" as well as £4 for the priest "that synges at our Lady chapell of Mountgrace" (Coppack, 171-2). Individuals actually provided altars at other Charterhouses, like the London charterhouse. Sir Thomas More lived for a time at the London Charterhouse, William Melton, for whom John Norton's treatise was copied, was one of the leading humanists of early 16th-century England; and Lady Jane Strangways left 10s to Richard Methley and Thurstan Watson in 1500. Thomas Arundel turned to Nicholas Love to translate an English version of Bonaventure's *Meditationes vitae Christi* in defence of Christianity against Lollardy. By the time of the Reformation, Henry VIII found that he needed the support of the Carthusians in England if he wanted to maintain primacy over the English church. See Coppack, Glynn. "'Make straight in the desert a highway for our God:' The Carthusians and Community in late medieval England," in *Monasteries and Society in the*

Katherine Zieman's recent study on Richard Methley focuses on the Trinity manuscript, but she reads its contents in the context of the 15th century's decreasing need for heremitic spirituality. With the increasing popularity of the chantry economy, Zieman asks, how did Methley's obscure and sometimes tortuous Latin make a contribution to the spiritual needs of the English nation?¹⁵⁸ Methley combines immediate experience of God as a form of "embodied knowledge inextricable from its experience,"¹⁵⁹ Methley, who focuses on languor throughout the *Scola*, the *Dormitorium*, and the *Refectorium*, places his experience in the refectory, "one of the few common spaces in any Carthusian charterhouse," rather than in a hermit's cell, and Zieman suggests that Methley's corporeal experience of God requires the incorporation of the monastic community for its effectiveness.¹⁶⁰ When Methley breaks out in monosyllabic expressions of heightened *oratio* produced during languor (A, A, A!) or (O, O, O!), Zieman posits that this is a sort of short-hand introduction and admonition to break out into ecstasy. This shorthand, she claims, would have been known to Carthusians as well as other solitaries and monastics, but more importantly, only to those who had also already experienced *canor*.¹⁶¹ Zieman's reading suggests that Methley's Latin text is as closed to communication as the monk himself.

British Isles in the Later Middle Ages, Janet E. Burton and Karen Stoeber, Eds (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2008).

¹⁵⁸ Zieman, Katherine. "Monasticism and the Public Contemplative in late medieval England: Richard Methley and his Spiritual Formation." *JMEMS* 42:3, Fall 2012 (699-724).

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 700-1.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 711.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, p. 715-7. Perhaps she does this so that she can focus primarily on the ways in which Methley does and does not live up to a Rollean ideal in his critical appropriation of *musica celestis*.

How does John Norton figure into this analysis? Norton (d. 1520/21) took orders as a Carthusian at Mount Grace around 1482 and eventually became prior there, serving in this office from 1509 until his death.¹⁶² Norton's work is, in a textual sense, more private, his archival traces even smaller than Methley's. Where Methley is frequently overlooked in scholarship, Norton is almost always ignored, mentioned, if ever, only as a means to discuss Methley, his confrere. In addition to this, Norton's archive, small as it is, has been made even smaller by the critical negation of one of his two potential manuscript productions.¹⁶³ Zieman discards Norton's unpublished work as "primarily

¹⁶² Beckett, W. N. M. "Norton, John (d. 1521/2)" in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

¹⁶³ The disbarred manuscript, Bodleian Library, MS Lat.th.d27, is a Carthusian collection from Coventry which includes among its Rollean and Hiltonian material a collection, a series of authoritative quotations on the worth of the solitary life supposedly written by Norton. This treatise, titled *Utrum religio solitariorum sit preferenda religioni in societate vivencium*, is listed in a colophon as having been written by Norton, "a monk of the order of the Carthusians near Coventy, who wrote after his own experience concerning the social life of the cloister" (Bodleian Library, MS Lat.th.d.27. *Explicit quoddam scriptum deuoti in christo prioris dominum Johannnis Norton quidam monachi de domo ordinis Cartusiensis iuxta ciuitatem Countrii, qui post experienciam vite socialis de gencium in claustro feruenter optauit ducere vitam solitariam in heremo*). Doyle gives no reason for his rejection of this collection. While there is no record of Norton ever having been enrolled in the Coventry Charterhouse of St Anne, Carthusian ascriptions are frequently inaccurate or incorrect, and there is no reason to imagine that this one has done a particularly precise job of locating its author (British Library, Additional MS 37790 is the perfect example: it neglects to recognize that the author of *Van den Blinkenden Styen* (Jan van Russbroec) is not a Carthusian, and includes Marguerite Porete's *Mirror* and yet is ignorant of its author's biography. Ruusbroec shows up almost everywhere in Carthusian miscellanies as a Carthusian.). The inclusion of the *Utrum religio solitariorum* among works ascribed to Norton makes sense when his other manuscript is taken into account: Lincoln, Cathedral Library, MS 57. Like Methley's collected works in the Trinity manuscript, this one contains three treatises on various aspects of Carthusian spirituality: obedience, the solitary life, the hermitage, the liturgy, and the role of each one of these things in hierophanic experience. Norton spent his days contemplating on the worth of the solitary life as opposed to the cenobitic religious one.

visionary in nature,” and then refrains from mentioning him again.¹⁶⁴ While Norton does not have a corpus of translated texts like Methley does, and while he does rely on visionary experience in structuring at least one of his treatises – the *Thesaurus* – disbarring him from the realm of serious religious writing for either of these reasons is both cursory and unfair. It denies Norton critical validity for the same reasons that Margery Kempe was denied identification as a “mystic,” both in her day and in ours.

In order to understand Carthusian *canor* – and thereby Carthusian mystical experience – Norton and Methley should be read together, as co-authors of a post-Rollean *musica celestis*. Both men are deeply invested in critical, analytical, and manuscriptal enactments of *canor*, as well as in a sort of textual expressivity that broadens the potential practitioners of *canor* to all readers as long as they read carefully, obediently, and charitably. Methley and Norton do this by expressing their revelatory experience as texts aware of their nature as texts, and moreover, as intertextual: as commentaries, dialogues, and epistles. Not only do they comment on Rollean *canor* while simultaneously interweaving Walter Hilton’s work and *The Cloud of Unknowing*’s critical views of embodied song – both Methley and Norton are deeply concerned with the way in which *canor* can be practiced while remaining obedient to a monastic order, and the mystical body they propose to resolve this tension is a unique answer to a recurrent problem: what does a mystic do with his body? – but they also comment on each other: the textual relationship between Methley’s manuscript (Trinity, MS O.2.56) and Norton’s (Lincoln,

¹⁶⁴ Zieman, Katherine. “Monasticism and the Public Contemplative in late medieval England: Richard Methley and his Spiritual Formation.” *JMEMS* 42:3, Fall 2012 (699-724), p. 720.

Cathedral MS 57) reveals a spiritual friendship between the two monks, a friendship that was, like their mystical experience, not completely captured by the written word.

Because so little scholarship has been done on Methley and Norton, it is appropriate to set out, very deliberately, the structure and main points of their manuscripts before moving on to a more thorough discussion of them. The most important dates are as follows:

1476 : Richard Methley enters Mount Grace Priory

1481 : Methley writes the *Scola Amoris Languidi* (Trinity MS O.2.56 fols 1r-22v)

1482 : John Norton enters Mount Grace Priory

1485 : Norton has the vision that will become his *Devota Lamentatio* (Lincoln Cathedral MS 57 fols 77r - 95v)

Methley writes the *Dormitorium Dilecti Dilecti* (Trinity MS O.2.56 fols 25r – 48r)

1487 : Methley writes the *Refectorium Salutis* (Trinity MS O.2.56 fols 49r – 70v)

1491 : Methley translates the *Cloud of Unknowing* and *Mirror of Simple Souls* into Latin

1509 : Norton becomes prior of Mount Grace

1521/22 : Norton dies

1528 : Methley dies.

Richard Methley and Cambridge, Trinity, MS O.2.56

Methley's manuscript is divided into three separate treatises; on closer inspection, each one has connections with the others:

The *Scola Amoris* (fols 1r – 22v) never mentions Carthusian spirituality specifically, but it does suggest that it was originally meant as a text for solitaires, a school-text dedicated to a specific contemplative subject: the analysis of the languor of love.¹⁶⁵ Throughout the text, the phrase “*amore langueo*” is subjected to repeated interpretation and re-definition. The *Scola* is set up like a dialogue between teacher and student: Christ instructs the lover on an aspect of *languor* in one chapter, and Methley responds in the next chapter. Some aspects of *amore langueo* are beneficial (such as the Christian who repeats Jesus’ name out of love for him), whereas others stem from an imperfect faith (*languor* can be a product of spiritual torpor). Christ, in turn, responds to Methley in revelatory visions, which the Carthusian frequently encodes in the mnemonic terms of specific liturgical places and times: rooms of the cloister and church festivals structure the *Scola*, another characteristic which serves to make this seem like a pedagogic treatise.¹⁶⁶ What makes this most like a schoolbook, however, are the marginal notations that Methley employs around the outside of the manuscript. These marginal glosses are mostly recapitulations of information that occur elsewhere in the text, doubling important points for the sake of emphasis.¹⁶⁷ These explanatory notes look

¹⁶⁵ Trinity MS O.2.56, *SAL*, fol. 20r: *Ibi autem (ni fallor) efficacissimis deliciis nutritus, scilicet contemplacionibus curie celestis, multo lucidius, quam unquam in mundo, ut sic habilitetur celo, sed vobis non dico solum. O amatores mundi. scilicet dei, viri religiosi heremi incole seu cenobite, qui magna fugetis peccata parnependentes minima. Rememoramini quod scriptum est. die pro anno dedi tibi: O quantum est ibi desiderium videndi deum, et quam longum est.* This is the way that the solitary knows how much can be accomplished in a year.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, *SAL*, fol. 7r is a good example: *In festo sancti petri aduincula in monte gracie corporaliter fui in ecclesia. Et dum peracta quam celebram missa deo gracias reddere curarem.*

¹⁶⁷ For instance, when the treatise declares that it is impossible for the true lover of God to be fatigued, the margin responds by saying “for God will either provide you with

much like the recension of information a student might take while listening to a lecture or reading carefully for the first time. This school-text closes with a creative exercise: an effusive poem of love-longing for God in which the mystic ascends into the angelic choir.

Like the *Scola* before it, Methley incorporates effusive song into the pedagogy of his next text, the *Dormitorium Dilecti Dilecti* (fols 25r – 48r). Also like the *Scola*, the *Dormitorium* interprets and reinterprets another short phrase, this time, from the Song of Songs: *Ego dormio, et cor meum vigilat*.¹⁶⁸ Not nearly as dialogic as the *Scola* nor as personal as the *Refectorium*, the *Dormitorium* presents Methley as a teacher ready to expound on mental liquescence and the spiritual benefits of sleep (and sitting – both are nods to Rolle’s influence).¹⁶⁹ Sleep, far from being a sign of spiritual torpor, instead provides a test-case for the rejection of the flesh all true contemplatives should seek. Sleep provides a freedom from the affairs of the world, and in this way frees the obedient mind to think of God.¹⁷⁰ In other words, the *Dormitorium* ponders the meaning of corporeality in relation to mystical ascent, while operating as a bridge between the *Scola* and the last text in the manuscript, the *Refectorium Salutis*.

sweetness or with patience.” Ibid, *SAL*, fol 5v, “*Quia amore langueo, impossibile est ut fatigeris*,” and later, “*Quia aut dulcedinem subministrat aut pacienciam*.”

¹⁶⁸ *Canticum Canticorum* 5:2.

¹⁶⁹ Trinity MS O.2.56, *DDD*, fol 34v and elsewhere. Methley begins by saying that he did not think he could speak about spiritual wakefulness in corporeal sleep until Christ assured him that he would be speaking *through* him, using him as a mouthpiece. For instance, see Ibid, *DDD*, fol 25v: *Ego dormio et cor meum vigilat cum in principio littera impossibilitatem habeat de necessitate ad spiritualem intellectum vertimus stilum. Et quia non discipulum sed magistrum decet docere. Peto et obsecro, ut doceas me et alios per me; scio et vere scio voluntatem tuam quia hic scribere me vis tecum nouo loquendi modo (quisquis verissime) tuum secundum aliquid non ut prius per inspirationem tuam proposito nomine utriusque ut patet in libris multis quos scripsi per te.*

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, *SAL*, fol 28v *Qui dormit corporaliter non cogitat naturaliter sicut vigilantes de amore mundi, et qui sic delectatur in amore dei ut obliuiscatur amorem mundi, et dormit ab amore mundi.*

The final treatise in the collection, the *Refectorium Salutis* (fol. 49r – 70v), is a mystical diary that decodes the mnemonic framework of liturgical place and time encoded in the *Scola*: each chapter opens with a note about the specific Church feast on which each vision occurred, and where in the monastery it happened.¹⁷¹ Like a capstone to Methley's project, this text also circles through the points of discussion Methley highlighted in the *Scola* and the *Dormitorium*: mystical song, liquefied corporeality, dialogues with Mary, Christ, and the Angels, temptation by the devil, the sustained repetition of the name of Jesus, the tension between the body and soul, the virtues of sleep and of sitting in the contemplative life, and the agglutination of *ego dormio* with *amore languo* in mystical song and effusive outpourings of "Ahs" and "Ohs." It is both record and performance, a textual play meant to be interpreted as visionary by the reader, who has already gone to school in the first two texts of the manuscript.

John Norton and Lincoln, Cathedral MS 57

Lincoln Cathedral MS 57 contains three treatises written by John Norton for which William Melton (d. 1528) provided introductory epistles.¹⁷² The entire manuscript

¹⁷¹ These include: The feast of the translation of St Hugh of Lincoln (49v), St (Pope) Mark the Confessor (fol 51r), St Dennis (fol 51v) St Wilfrid (fol 54r), St Crispin (fol 54v), Feast of Simon the Apostle (fol 56v), the feast of all Saints (fol 57v), all Souls (fol 58v), the Feast of Abbot Leonard, for whom he has special affection and after which he talks about his spiritual *canor* (fol 59v), the feast of relics (fol 60r), the Feast of St Theodore, Martyr (fol 60r), St Brice (fol 59v), St Edmund of Canterbury (fol 60r), and then again St Hugh of Lincoln (fol 62r), St Edmund, King of England (fol 63v), the Vigil of St Andrew (fol 64v), Saint Nicholas (fol 66v), the Sunday after the feast of the conception of the virgin (fol 67v), St Eulalie (fol 68r), St Lucy (fol 68v), the Third Sunday of Advent (fol 69v). Methley cycles through the whole church year twice.

¹⁷² The fullest biography of Melton can be found in Rex, Richard. "Melton, William (d. 1528)" in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). A theologian, Catholic priest, and authority on Euclid whose lectures at

was copied by one “Frater Flecher” – an unidentified monk – at some point in the first half of the 16th century. There is quite a bit of rubrication, both by Flecher and by another hand, which also made interlinear corrections and wrote the text on fols 75r -76v. Flecher often places a “*maria*,” “*ihc*” and, rarely, more extensive pious ejaculations in the margins next to new sections of the text; there are also a number of small marginal pen-drawings.¹⁷³ The three treatises are connected by an overarching theme: all describe Norton’s experiences of God after taking up the Carthusian habit in 1482. Each treatise, like Methley’s, is structured around a Latin *ostenato*; unlike Methley, however, who sublimates an implied ethos of monastic obedience to the general rubric of devotional pedagogy, Norton makes his project clear: each text explicitly addresses the theme of obedience.

The first treatise is the *Musica monachorum* (fols. 1–27), a text written specifically for Carthusians and in praise of the Carthusian life (a divergence from Methley, who never explicitly champions the order), which culminates in the song of angels. The repeated phrase in this treatise, *pura obediencia*, highlights a number of ways in which monastic obedience draws the devout man from satanic temptation to holy love, and a central section with specific examples of obedience comprises the majority of the

Cambridge were remarked upon by contemporaries. This reforming humanist had ties to John Fisher, John Constable, Ralph Collingwood, and John Colet; he became the chancellor of York in 1496, and at the time of his death owned over 100 books, among them new favorites of the humanist movement, from Plato and Thomas More (*Utopia*) to Pica della Mirandola, Jacques Lefevre d’Etaples, and Erasmus, and John Fisher (contra Luther). That a humanist scholar had chosen to write an introduction to Norton’s work indicates the degree of respect his visionary experiences garnered.

¹⁷³ Lincoln, Cathedral Library MS 57, *MM*, fol. 22v, includes an *ihc* in a heart, on a shield, fol. 40v has a shield with the five wounds of Christ, fol 41r a ladder with seven rungs, fol 63v a manícula, and fol 66r an *ihc* inscribed within a heart.

text.¹⁷⁴ Norton describes his visitation by devils, angels, Christ, and Mary; Christ and Mary have a similar topic of discussion: the virtues of obedience the Carthusian rule, which “the angels call most excellent.”¹⁷⁵ The final section of this treatise is a recension of Pseudo-Dionysius’ *Celestial Hierarchies* commingled with his *Ecclesiastical Hierarchies*, as Norton outlines his ascent to the Trinity, through obedience, to the ranks of priests, prophets, apostles, and angels. Unlike Methley’s *Scola*, however, this treatise ends with a simple prayer rather than a pious poem; Norton has not yet begun to practice what he delineates in a formulaic manner in this treatise.

The second selection complicates the themes of the first. The *Thesaurus cordium vere amantium* (fol 28r – 76v) is an extended explication Matthew 11:28, “*venite ad me omnes qui laboratis et onerati estis et ego reficiam vos*”: every chapter ends with a repetition of this verse after exploring some aspect of it: *O vos omnes qui laboratis*, he says, reading, chapter by chapter, in turn the *O* (what does it mean to call?) *vos omnes* (who is “everyone?”), *laborant* (what does it mean to work?), *onerati* (what is a spiritual burden?) *venite ad me* (how does one come to Christ?), *ego reficiam vos* (what sort of refreshment should the devout person expect?).¹⁷⁶ This treatise, like Methley’s *Scola*, is structured as a series of dialogues which aid in celestial ascent, but the most memorable portion of this book is the middle section, fols 53r – 69v, in which Norton is carried out of his body to a holy mountain. Here, he sees a golden castle, replete with singing bodies

¹⁷⁴ Noah, Abarham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and Daniel, as well as Mary and Elizabeth.

¹⁷⁵ Lincoln, Cathedral Library MS 57, *MM*, fol. 16r. *Angelis vocatus est excellentissimus*.

¹⁷⁶ Norton adds a Methlian echo, perhaps as a direct quotation of his spiritual brother’s didactic method Norton, fol 9r: “*O vos omnes qui transitus per viam attendite et videte si est dolor sicu dolor meus*” and Methley on fol 31r: “*O vos omnes qui laboratis et onerati estis venite ad me et ego reficiam vos.*” Compare this with the Latin from Matthew 11:28: “*Venite ad me omnes qui laboratis, et onerati estis, et ego reficiam vos.*”

of men and women, saints and angels, who present into his mind a “miraculous melody of the heart.”¹⁷⁷ The remainder of the *Thesaurus* is devoted to constructing a simulacrum of this palace within Norton’s heart, a project accomplished through a second series of dialogues in which Christ himself glosses the meaning of the heavenly palace both for the reader and the visionary.¹⁷⁸

The third and final treatise in the Lincoln manuscript, the *Devota lamentatio* (fols. 77–95v) is a mystical diary akin to Methley’s *Refectorium Salutis*. Like Rolle’s semi-autobiographical *Incendium Amoris* and Margery Kempe’s autobiographical *Boke* and like Methley’s *Refectorium*, Norton’s is a chronological record articulating a series of visions beginning in his cell after mass on the Friday before Whitsunday in 1485. Norton is visited by the Virgin Mary, who, accompanied by a glorious choir of angels, appears to the monk; she is on a mission to grant him the gifts promised to the faithful in both the *Musica Monachorum* and the *Thesaurus*.¹⁷⁹ This short treatise is comprised of a long prayer to the Virgin on the destitution of the flesh, an excursus on the angelic order, and instruction on how a Carthusian, in silence, rejects corporeality for the eternal phenomenon of angelic song.¹⁸⁰ Here, repeated over and over again are the lines “I languish for love”: *amore langueo* (a la Rolle, and Methley), a repeated “O O O!” and

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, *DL*, fol. 64r: *Mira melodia cordis*.

¹⁷⁸ Chastity leads to pure contemplation, which in turn leads to the gift of the light of the three suns: clarity, fervor, and radiance without division. Just as the sun illumines the Castle on the Mountain of God, so the pure contemplative will be lit up from without, and made capable of ascending, without the weight of flesh, to the heavenly supper (Lincoln, Cathedral Library MS 57, fol 76v).

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, *DL*, fol 80r.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, *DL*, fol. 95r: *Et in custodiendo cellam et silencium et ceteras obseruancias sue religionis deuotissime secundum statum suum. Et ego iam corontaus est inter summos choros angelorum, ubi nulla cogitacio animam sine bona et amorosa absque sempiterna renummeratione transit.*

“A A A!” (again, like Methley), and lyric prayer (like Methley’s *Scola* or many of Rolle’s lyrics).¹⁸¹ Like Methley’s *Refectorium*, the structure of the text is based around the liturgical calendar. However, unlike Methley’s diary, there is only one entry, and only one – long – revelation. In this final treatise, Norton has taken one distinctly monastic visionary experience and used all of Methley – and Rolle, and his own – critical didactic textual apparatus to interpret the event.

From this general overview, the broad similarities between Methley and Norton’s texts should be obvious.¹⁸² Tripartite in structure, sometimes expository, intent on the dialogic form, sometimes effusive, they structure their narratives around moments of rapture that cause ascent into the hierarchy of the angels while still allowing for liturgical participation and monastic obedience. While Norton is much more explicit about his specifically Carthusian program, Melton’s long introductions in the Lincoln manuscript suggest that Norton eventually saw a broader readership, and Methley’s texts were from the beginning directed to all devout readers. In that case, how do these two texts take Rollean *canor* and make it specifically Carthusian?

¹⁸¹ Norton dates this vision to 1485, which means that he was having visions and putting them to paper at exactly the same time as Richard Methley. The first two treatises do not have a date appended, and so we cannot know for sure if they date from the same time, but their content and the way they work together as a group suggests that they were probably written in the 1480s as well. If not, Norton felt no reason to differentiate his experience by means of a temporal shift, and it seems unimportant to controvene him. Ibid, DL, fol. 79v: *In die veneris ante festum pentecostes anne tercio ingressione mee ad hanc sanctam religionem. Anno v. diu Mo ccco lxxxv immediate post missam sedenti in cella apparint mihi in spiritu repente raptio gloriosissima domina angelorum maria mater iesu veri dei et veri hominis.*

¹⁸² This chapter is not particularly concerned with identifying which text influenced which author; causal connections could find arguments heading in the other direction. However, the most plausible option is that Methley finished writing all of his treatises before Norton began his own. Other scenarios are possible, though, and throughout this chapter I have kept these possibilities open in an attempt to show the possibilities these texts hold for mutual exchange.

The *Scola Amoris Languidi*, the *Dormitorium Dilecti Dilecti* and Norton's *Thesaurus Cordium Vere Amantum* all engage in formal structural elements that imbue their prose with a poetic element, engaging closely with formal rhetorical structures that mimic a type of lyrical or musical repetition. Methley and Norton wanted to make their writing more memorable, and they employed at times a highly alliterative, metrical style that mimicked the intercalated lyrics of Rollean *canor*. The mystical vagations of Methley's *Scola Amoris Languidi* and Norton's *Devota Lamentatio* both end in euphoric representations of *canor* that is rarified – representational of epiphanic experience – and familiar. However, where Carthusian *canor* differs from Rolle's version of it is in another formal element: both Methley and Norton use short repeated phrases – *amore langueo*, *ego dormio*, and *o vos omnes* are the three most prevalent ones – that they weave through the argumentative logic of their texts. These phrases, like verbal *ostenatos*, heighten the “musical” nature of these Carthusian treatises in some very important ways, as I hope to show.

Carthusian *canor* and *amore langueo*: verbal *ostenatos*

Methley's *Scola Amoris Languidi* begins with a discussion of heavenly music. Is reception of heavenly song active or passive, it asks?¹⁸³ Is *canor* attained by voluntary mental exercise, or is it a special gift of grace, received while at rest? These are the sorts of questions a reader of English mysticism, well-versed in the *Cloud of Unknowing*, Walter Hilton, Marguerite Porete, and Richard Rolle would have been primed to ask. For Methley, heavenly music appears in an instant, and then withdraws itself. The means by

¹⁸³ Trinity MS O.2.56, *SAL*, Fol 4v: *Quomodo deus operatur in homine et de exercitiis quibuscumque debitis seu voluntariis?*

which it does this are harder to ascertain than the lasting effect, which is, namely, lovesickness, which is marked in this text by a repeated phrase: “*amore langueo*.” How does the writer, Methley asks, having experienced the ineffable, describe it to another person? “*Disce ergo per signa*,” he concludes: we “speak about it according to its signs.”¹⁸⁴ But what is the textual sign of mystical experience?

Methley’s Latin prose switches into a semi-poetic register in response:

*Quomodo deus languet amore,
Ut coronet gloria et honore,
Quem diligit in multo et mirifico dulcore,
Immo aliquando angelico amore.*¹⁸⁵

The memory of the ineffable affects the formal structure of Methley’s language; it shifts the relationship words have with each other from one of signification and connotation, as in prose, to one of sonority, highlighted by the poetic form. Rollean *canor* is in part about the production of song as poetics, and about the shift from prose into lyric; Methley’s own prosopoetic production operates similarly. Though the poem above is inchoate, incomplete, even bad – it doesn’t follow a particular metrical scheme and its feminine rhyme is not typical of late Latin poetics – it is still a gesture towards poetic language, an attempt at *canor*. Whether or not the initial experience of *canor* comes about through passive or active mental exertion, Methley seems to say, the production of musical poetics pursuant upon this experience is proof of attainment of angelic

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, *SAL*, fol 7v-8r: *Quomodo potest aliquis intelligere quomodo languor amoris est in dilacione nisi didicerit diligere? Multa signa: multum esse alicuius amorem erga liquem ostendunt, sed precul dubio qui expertus est amoris dilacionem plus discit in momento, quam aliquis per signa in toto vite sue tempore. Quid igitur? [...] Experiencia a deo datur, suis tum ei per iusticiam via paratur; disce ergo per signa.*

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, *SAL*, fol 7v-8r: Whoever loves God / Will be crowned with glory and honor. / If he loves him in great, marvelous sweetness, / He will suddenly be taken into the angelic love.

indwelling. *Languor* – longing – suggests the pain of absence, a silence pregnant with possibility, and although *languor amoris* defers immediate presence of the beloved, the *Scola Amoris Languidi* makes up for this absence in the form of textual presence, providing a lyrical supplement for it.

In the final chapter of the *Scola*, this lyric impulse appears again. Here, soul and the flesh engage in an increasingly staccato dialogue until, finally, the text breaks into song, tracing the body of a crucified Christ as it does so:

<i>Iesu bone rector morum</i>	
<i>Et saluator seculorum</i>	
<i>iubilius merencium</i>	
<i>Manus dextere vulnus sanctum</i>	
<i>cordis viri fugat planctum</i>	5
<i>more diligencium</i>	
<i>Eterne rex altissime</i>	
<i>Atque panis dulcissime</i>	
<i>Esus te seruentium</i>	
<i>Vulnus nos sinistre manus</i>	10
<i>Benedicat ne vulcanus</i>	
<i>iurat cor credentium</i>	
<i>Salve Iesu salve Iesu</i>	
<i>Melos auri mel in esu</i>	
<i>sanitas amantium</i>	15
<i>Dextri pedi vulnus latum</i>	
<i>nostrum expurget reatum</i>	
<i>salus infirmantium</i>	
<i>Vestre igni sancti flatus</i>	
<i>Benes noster aduocatus</i>	20
<i>vita te videntium</i>	
<i>Pedis leui vulnus patens</i>	
<i>cordis pandat vulnus latens</i>	
<i>More confitentium</i>	
<i>Salve iesu iesu bone</i>	25
<i>In amoris unione</i>	
<i>Sanctitas viventium</i>	
<i>Vulnus cordis lanceati</i>	
<i>Sanet vulnus desperati</i>	
<i>Corda quod canentium.</i> ¹⁸⁶	

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, *SAL*, 21v-22r:

Jesus, good governor of virtues
And savior of the ages
You are worthy of *iubilus*.
Your holy right hand was wounded
The heart of man might flee complaints
and be moved to diligence.
Eternal king most high
You are the bread most sweet
Your servants eat you.
Your left hand was wounded
Bless those – do not wound them –
who swear that their hearts are faithful.
Salve, Jesus, *Salve*, Jesus
Honey in my ears, and honey in my mouth
You are the lovers' health.
Your right foot was wounded
To purge all those who are guilty from sin
And bring health to the sick.
Your holy fire blows
As a good advocate
And the life of those who see you.
Your left foot was wounded; your heart
spread out through your side-wound,
As I am moved to confess.
Salve, Jesus, Good Jesus
The holy live in
the union of love.
Your heart was lanced
And this brings health to the desperate;
Therefore, our hearts sing.

These lines trace Christ's body, mapping divine hands and feet onto the heart as well as onto the rhythms of poetry. This poem is not itself the *iubilus* referred to in the opening stanza of the poem (*iubilus mirencia*, l. 3) – this is an ecstatic “A! A! A!” that will come later – but this is what music sounds like outside of the *corpus*, when flesh dissolves into the mystical body of Christ, itself pierced, perforated, tearing, and wearing away. As the lover's body dissolves into song, the body of Christ dissolves alongside it in heartfelt tunefulness (*vulnus cordis lanceati... corda quod canentium*, ll. 28-30). This is a sung transubstantiation, the product of a life of meditation. But this production has not sprung from the *Scola ex nihilo*; it has its precursors and its tradition: the leonine verse invokes the rhymed votive offices in vogue in the late medieval period, its references to *iubilus* recall the poetics of Richard Rolle, and its repeated *salves* are well-known from the writings of the Cult of the Holy Name.¹⁸⁷ Methley is not unlike other authors he has translated – like Marguerite Porete – whose ultimate expressions of divine love take the form of poesis.¹⁸⁸ The *Scola* ends in poetic proof that the mystic has returned to his spiritual home in devotional textuality. But there is another technique by which Methley (and, a little later, John Norton), create a specifically monastic effect of *canor* in their texts: the verbal *ostenato*.

¹⁸⁷ Hughes, Andrew. *late medieval Liturgical Offices*. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of medieval Studies, 1996). On the Cult of the Holy Name, see Renevey, Denis, *The Moving of the Soul: Function of Metaphors of Love in the Writings of Richard Rolle and the medieval Mystical Tradition*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); New, Elizabeth Anne, *The cult of the Holy Name of Jesus in late medieval England, with special reference to the Fraternity in St Paul's Cathedral, London c. 1450-1558*. (London: University of London, 1999).

¹⁸⁸ Porete, Margaret. *The Mirror of Simple Souls*. Colledge, Edmund, J.C. Marler, and Judith Grant, ed. and trans. (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1999).

Scola Amoris Languidi means “The School of the Languor of Love,” and the *Scola* should be read as a didactic text, one that teaches its reader the full unitive force of the treatise’s final musico-poetic lines. Though these lyric moments are striking and memorable and have a precedent in mysticism, there is another, more subtle lyricism which weaves its way through the *Scola*. Throughout the text, Methley repeats the phrase *amore langueo* (I languish for love). Each time he provides a slightly different interpretation of the line, which ends up operating as a rondeau or refrain. The term “refrain” is not inaccurate: *amore langueo* was a popular refrain in late medieval religious lyric, and some of the most beautiful poems in the English repertoire employ it.¹⁸⁹ And, like Methley’s final lyric, these poems typically trace the body of Christ crucified as he cries after his ungrateful lover, the Soul of Man, the Church, or the fallen sinner. Typical of such poems is “In The Valley of the Restless Mind,” a fifteenth-century affective lyric.¹⁹⁰ “Loke unto myn hondis, Man,” says Christ,

¹⁸⁹ See Richard Rolle’s *Form of Living*. Note that *amore langueo* appears in the Rollean canon in the text most germane to the solitary life. Among these is a poem found on British Library, MS Douce 322, fol 8v, *Quia amore langueo*.

¹⁹⁰ “In the Valley of the Restless Mind” appears in two 15th-century manuscripts: London, Lambeth Palace Library MS 853, and Cambridge, Cambridge University Library Hh.4.12, fols. 41b-44a. Editions can be found in Furnivall, F. J., ed. *Political, Religious, and Love Poems*. (London: EETS, 1903); Alexander, Michael and Felicity Riddy, Eds. *The Middle Ages (700-1550)*. (New York: St. Martin's, 1989). St. Martin's Anthologies of English Literature. Vol. 1, pp. 416-21; Beckwith, Sarah. "Limens, Boundaries and Wounds: Corpus Christi as Rite of Passage." In *Christ's Body: Identity, Culture and Society in late medieval Writings*. (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 55-63; Bynum, Caroline Walker. *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), pp. 110-69; Cross, J. E. "The Virgin's *Quia Amore Langueo*." *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 73 (1972), 37-44; Dronke, Peter. "The Song of Songs and medieval Love-Lyric." *The medieval Poet and His World*. Storia e Letteratura Raccolta di Studi e Testi 164. (Rome: Storia e Letteratura, 1984), pp. 209-36; Gillespie, Vincent. "Strange Images of Death: The Passion in Later medieval English Devotional and Mystical Writing." in *Zeit, Tod und Ewigkeit in der*

These gloves were yove me whan y hir soughte –
 Thei ben not white, but rede and wan,
 Onbroudrid with blood. My spouse hem broughte.
 Thei wole not of, y loose hem noughte.
 I wowe hir with hem wherevere sche go –
 These hondis for hir so freendli foughte,
*Quia amore langueo.*¹⁹¹

Throughout the “Valley” the stigmata are refigured as bloody garments, the Church depicted as a faithless lover; this is a tradition that goes back at least as far as Bernard’s sermons on the Song of Songs, but was known just as well in England through Richard Rolle’s *Form of Living*, a text that highlights the importance of the solitary life and obligation to a rule and repeats the *amore langueo* throughout his text.¹⁹² It also has striking similarities to the Latin poem at the end of Methley’s *Scola* quoted above. However, Methley also takes this received tradition and turns it into Christ’s own plaintive prosody:

O, man, I languish in love (*amore langueo*) for you, because your ingratitude crucifies me, O man, *amore langueo*. Listen to me, I implore you, so that I might teach you about this languor so that you will no longer be ungrateful to your lover: there is nothing lower than to be ungrateful because of my love, because I am good and have given you your will. If it

Renaissance Literatur. Hogg, James, Ed. (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1987), pp. 111-59; Gray, Douglas. "The Five Wounds of Our Lord — I-IV." *Notes and Queries*, n.s. 10 (1963), 50-51, 82-89, 127-34, 163-68; Heimmel, Jennifer P. *God is Our Mother: Julian of Norwich and the medieval Image of Christian Feminine Divinity*. (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1982), pp. 34-45; McGinn, Bernard. "The Language of Love in Christian and Jewish Mysticism." in *Mysticism and Language*. Katz, Steven T, Ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 202-35; Rubin, Miri. "Christ's Suffering Humanity." in *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in late medieval Culture*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 303-16; and Woolf, Rosemary. "The Theme of Christ the Lover-Knight in medieval English Literature." *Review of English Studies*, n.s. 13 (1962): 1-16.

¹⁹¹ "In a Valley of this Restless Mind," ll. 41-8.

¹⁹² Song of Songs 2:4-5 reads *Introduxit me in cellam vinariam ordinavit in me caritatem, fulcite me floribus stipate me malis quia amore langueo*.

please you, O man, I beg you, deign to love me, because *amore langueo*.¹⁹³

Part of the point of the *Scola* is the recognition of the full pain that Christ suffered on the cross, a pain that is, like *canor*, ineffable in lexical terms, and yet remains communicable through form or in inarticulate cries.

As Christ repeats the “*O homo*” from the cross, the vocative address conditions the reader to expect heavenly speech to sound a certain way: it is a repeated plea that builds expectation of verbal return in the recognition of its absence. It is also language that calls the reader to attend, that is, to wait for it:

Who is able to understand how much pain Christ suffered on the cross? It excels all other sadness that one might speak of. *O vos omnes qui transitus per viam, attendite et videte si est dolor sicut dolor meus*. Deservedly, then, he says, *amore langueo*.¹⁹⁴

The *amore langueo* is also an appeal: “Look and see if any pain is like mine!”¹⁹⁵ The *amore langueo* is an unceasing affect towards a private object of love. At the same time, the *O vos omnes* connects the private languor of love to the public performance of the liturgy: *O vos omnes* would have been familiar to anyone who attended the Tenebrae service for Holy Saturday – the middle of the Passion sequence.¹⁹⁶ Christ’s call to attend

¹⁹³Trinity MS O.2.56, *SAL*, fol. 5v: *O homo amore langueo propter te, quia ingratitude tua nimis cruciat me. O homo amore langueo. Audi me precor languidum nimis et docebo te, ne ultra sis ingratus amatori tuo: Quia bonus sum datur tibi opcio. Placeat tibi, o homo, et peto ut digneris diligere me, quia amore langueo*.

¹⁹⁴Ibid, *SAL*, fol. 9r: *Quis potest intelligere quantus sunt dolor passionis christi in cruce? Exuperat eum omnem dolorem sicut dicit ipse. O vos omnes qui transitus per viam attendite et videte si est dolor sicut dolor meus. Merito proinde clamas dicit amore langueo*.

¹⁹⁵Lamentations 1:12, which is used as part of the Tenebrae service for Holy Saturday.

¹⁹⁶Norton quotes the passage from Matthew 11 with an added verbal echo: “*O vos omnes qui transitus per viam attendite et videte si est dolor sicu dolor meus*” and Methley on fol 31r: “*O vos omnes qui laboratis et onerati estis venite ad me et ego reficiam vos*.”

to the *amore langueo* occurs within the narrative, and the liturgical play, of his crucifixion.

What makes the languor of love a type of *canor* is its ability to communicate mutually to the heart: humans suffer the languor of love in equal measure to Christ. “I am a poor beggar,” says Methley,

Therefore, help me. I ask you to make me languish sensibly out of love for you, so that you may be my faithful lover, and because of this I will be able to be a faithful lover to you, so that finally, in honor of you, I shall greet all people with an invitation that is most graceful.¹⁹⁷

For the mystic, this type of suffering is also the anticipation of future joy. Love-longing is mystical proof that the worshipper is particularly blessed; it is a protracted sense-experience that stands in for a marker of the epiphanic love of God. The corporeal results of this longing are both devastating and delicious. “You are ill because of the languor of love,” Christ explains to the reader:

But, sick in the languor of love, you are hardly able to think, forming these words in your spirit: *amor, amor, amor*, and at last, deficient, lacking that form you desire, your entire spirit will breathe out. *a. a. a.*, in one way or another, either singing, or, more accurately, crying out in your spirit in praise.¹⁹⁸

The mystic is ill, his ability to think rationally is impeded, and he literally expires in love, his breathing wounded and broken like the disarticulated body of Christ in the poems

Compare this with the Latin from Matthew 11:28: “*Venite ad me omnes qui laboratis, et onerati estis, et ego reficiam vos.*”

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, SAL, fol. 4v: *Ego autem mendicus sum et pauperum. Sollicitus esto mei. Face me queso te sensibiliter languere amore tuo, ut sicut michi fidelis amator es, ita ego tibi vicissim amator fidelis sum, ut tandem ad honorem tuum et omnium salutem dicere valeam cum summa gratiarum accione.*

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, SAL, fol. 7v: *Sed inualescente languore amoris vix cogitare potui formans in spiritu hec uerba: Amor, Amor, Amor. O tandem deficiens ab hac forma exspectaui quam totaliter spiritum exspirare possem: A. A. A. tum modo aut consimili modo canens pocius quam clamans in spiritu per gaudio.*

already discussed above. And yet, this cry is silent, as both body and the imaginative faculties of the mind are incapacitated by longing. Form is – both in literary and in imagistic terms – again of the utmost import here, as the missing corporeal form of Christ’s physical presence causes a deliberate shift in the form of vocalic expression available to the lover, who sings (*canens*) and cries (*clamans*) in his spirit (*in spiritu*). Carthusian *canor* requires the absence of Christ; as his form removes itself from the mystic, the mystic’s spirit is bereft of everything but a single syllable: *a*.¹⁹⁹

A man languishes for love because there is a great conflict between his spirit and his flesh, and when his spirit desires to surpass the flesh, and continually contradicts it, then he says *ego amore langueo*.²⁰⁰

Although the heights of love are constructed as sense-experience, the *languor* of love involves leaving the body behind while engaging a repetitive poetics, one that refers to the liturgy in both explicit and formal terms.

Furthermore, Methley’s *canor* is centered around fraternal love (*caritas*), that is most easily accessed in a monastic environment. “It is impossible for one to languish in love and hate his brother,” Methley says.²⁰¹ “Therefore,” he concludes

You lovers who want to know *amore langueo* and truly desire to dissolve and to be with Christ – who is himself eternal glory – know that he gave me the gift of humility and fraternal charity, and this is the same thing as *amore langueo*.²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ In this way, it is like the *Cloud of Unknowing* or Rollean *canor*.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, *SAL*, fol. 3v: *Languet homo amore quia inter spiritum et carnem maxima colluctacio est cum spiritus egredi cupiat quasi continue et continuo et tamen contradicit care et dico ego amore langueo*.

²⁰¹ Ibid, *SAL*, fol. 8v: *Impossibile est enim languentem amore fratri inuidere*.

²⁰² Ibid, *SAL*, fol. 7v: *Vos igitur o amatores scitote, quia amore langueo et vere cupio dissolui et esse cum christo, ipsi gloria in secula, ipse dedit michi donum humilitatis et fraterne charitatis et ideo amore langueo*.

One means of attaining *canor* is to engage intentionally in fraternal care. This sentiment highlights the second aspect that makes Carthusian *canor* different from its Rollean base: *canor* is an action which can be undertaken by a layperson, but which is most easily expressed in the form of a monastic community: a world centered around fraternity in the guise of reiterative liturgical poetics.

The importance of fraternal community is part of Methley's text, but where it appears most explicitly is in John Norton's *Musica monachorum*, or "The Music of Monks," which is about the importance of Carthusian obedience as a type of *canor*. In this text, moreover, John Norton picks up and repeats the verbal gestures his confrere, Methley, makes. For instance, Norton uses *amore languet* in his own emphatic repetitions in the Lincoln Manuscript. "Many solitaires and others," Norton says,

wishing to ascend the steps of perfection are impeded from the sweetness of God by their own thoughts and by the arguments of the Devil, against whom you should hurl the following phrase faithfully into your hearts: *Jesus est amore meus*, whom I am searching for and in whom I believe. Therefore, *amore languet*.²⁰³

Norton takes up his fellow Carthusian's refrain, employing it in his own discourse of mystical ascent. By doing so, he is not only invoking the formal repetition that constitutes *canor*; he is also showing his indebtedness to Methley as a writer: a form of humble, charitable reading.

Norton follows Methley's injunction to engage in *canor*. He invokes the *amore languet*, depicting it as a weapon to be used against the devil and against rational

²⁰³ Lincoln MS 57, MM, fol 22v: *Et per talia multi solitarii et alii volentes gradus perfectionis ascendere impediti sunt a cognitione sui ipsius et dei dulcedinis degustacione suis in omni argumento diaboli quod tibi immittitur dic fideliter in corde tuo ihesus est amore meus quem quero in quem credo. Cuius amore languet.*

cognition; *amore langueo* pierces the heart of the lover, opening it up to make room for *canor*. He calls Jesus' name in a pious outburst. And, like many moments in Methley's schoolbook *Scola*, Norton includes a marginal note at this point in his text:

Therefore, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, liberator, helper, and pious protector, do not take your mind from me in evil times, I beg you faithfully, because *amore langueo*.²⁰⁴

In Norton's *Musica monachorum*, *canor* and the gloss work together. This suggests that the *Musica* is itself an expression of the Carthusian obedience it champions: Norton is reading, performing, and writing as part of an exercise in languor, a *lá* Methley.

Norton uses the *amore langueo* again in the *Devota Lamentatio*, a text filled with pious cries symptomatic of *canor*. When the Methlian-Rollean refrain appears here, it is a plea to the Virgin Mary:

O, most benign consoler of all, I flee to you for refuge; hear me and help me, for I flee to you; bless me for I have long and ardently desired you and your blessing. O, perfect pattern of justice, justify my soul, and lead me out of this body, through your sweet blessing, and free me, for I desire you like pure wine, because *amore langueo*.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ Ibid, *MM*, fol. 22v: *Ideo ihesu ihesu ihesu liberator, adiutor, et pie protector, mens ne defers me in tempore malo fideliter te rogo, quia tuo amore langueo. (Nota de virtute et salutare ac continua inuocacione dulcissimmi nomines ihesu in tempore tribulacionis ihc)*

²⁰⁵ Ibid, *DL*, fol. 86v: *O benignissima consolatrix omnium ad te confugiencium. Audi et exaudi me fugientem ad te et benedic mihi tam diu desiderans ardentem benedictionem tuam. O perfectissima norma iusticie iustifica animarum meam et educ eam de corpore isto quia propter tuam dulcissimam benedictionem libenter meri desidero quia amore langueo.* In the same set of prayers he has personally addressed the Trinity and Christ: *DL*, Lincoln MS 57 fol. 87r: "*per amore sancte trinitatis immenso quia amore langueo*;" *DL*, Lincoln MS 57 fol. 91v: "*Eciam O amantissime ihesu a te declinare nequeo quia amore langueo.*"

The tone of this phrase mimics Methley's invocation of it: *amore langueo* is not just a prayer, but it is also a petition to the love-object to heal the rupture of absence, and a plea that the lover be removed from his flesh in order to attain union with God.

For Methley and Norton, *amore langueo* is a way of coping with the lack of mystical experience.²⁰⁶ *Amore langueo* occurs when the beloved removes himself (or herself) from the lover, and when quiet devotional moments turn into moments of anticipation because of this absence. In doing so, it connects the Carthusians in a mutual bond of affection to the crucified Christ, to the church, and to their monastic brothers. Furthermore, as Methley structures his *Scola* around the reiterated *amore langueo*, the refrain itself becomes programmatic, part of the fabric of the mystical text as languorous: there is not a single section of the *Scola Amoris Languidi* that does not end with the *amore langueo*, not one chapter fails to arrive after its vagations with a return to this comfortable, expected, verbal place.

Amore langueo, though never the primary focus of Methley's *Dormitorium Dilecti Dilecti* or *Refectorium Salutis*, appears another thirty times over the course of the Trinity manuscript, each time reminding the reader of the textual and devotional distance traveled since its last iteration.²⁰⁷ For example, an entry from the *Refectorium Salutis* ends with the *amore langueo* refrain:

Here I was, one day, in the year of our lord 1485, on the Feast of the Translation of St Hugh of Lincoln, when I was saying prime in my cell in Mount Grace, and suddenly the song of angels (*canor angelicus*) came to

²⁰⁶ This is like Margery Kempe, who cries both when God is present to her as well as when he withdraws himself from her. See Windeatt, Barry. Ed. *The Book of Margery Kempe*. (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004).

²⁰⁷ The *Dormitorium Dilecti Dilecti* repeats the phrase fourteen times, and the *Refectorium Salutis* a total of sixteen times.

me with holy music (*carmine sancto*), and at first I my body was so completely overwhelmed that I was hardly able to stand, but after it had happened the third time, our lord said to me that I had been chosen and should always be ready for his return, for he had come down from far above me to lead me from the tyranny of my deficient body – and indeed, I did not want to love it, but to die, for love is strong as death. And thus I threw up a clamour, and sighing in languor I replied: “O, He who greets me with such delight, *amore langueo*.”²⁰⁸

The languor of love is constantly in Methley’s mind. By referring back to the repeating trope of his first treatise within his last, Methley provides a sense of formal closure to the mystical ascent contained within the Trinity manuscript as a whole; there is an element of the cyclical, repetitive, and iterable in the construction of devotion. It is liturgical; in mystical ascent, the Carthusian does not so much climb a *ladder* as he does turn a contemplative wheel, or rotate the contemplative text as a teachable object within the anticipatory intention of his mind: the text is an object of contemplation. When Norton appropriates the *amore langueo*, he provides proof of Carthusian *canor*’s textual pedagogy. Norton use of the *amore langueo* in the same way Methley; he studied in, and with, Methley’s *Scola Amoris*.

Alternate Ostenatos: *ego dormio, o vos omnes*, and Carthusian obedience

²⁰⁸ Trinity O.2.56, RS, fol 49v-50r: *Hinc est quod hodierna die scilicet Anno domini millesimo quadringentessimo octogesimo septimo in festo translacionis sancti hugonis lincolniensis, cum ad primam dicendam in cella mea, in monte gracie surrexissem subito venit in me canor angelicus cum carmine sancto et vix substiti sospes in corpore primam utcumque preimplere, sed post ad terciam domine nostre dicendam ad lectum quem semper ob hoc paratum habeo redii, super illum me in longum proiciens et fere a regimine corporali defeci immo loquelam amisi ut moriturus, quia fortis est ut mors dileccio. Et sic iacui clamans suspirans languens et gemens: O quis annuntiabit dilecto, quia amore langueo.*

Amore langueo is not the only formal structuring phrase of the Trinity and Lincoln manuscripts. In Methley's *Dormitorium Dilecti Dilecti* (*The Dormitory of the Beloved of the Beloved*), the second treatise in the Trinity manuscript, a repeated "*ego dormio*" – I sleep – is added to the *amore langueo* of the *Scola*. The full quotation, *ego dormio, et cor meum vigilat*: "I sleep, and my heart wakes," is a quotation from the Song of Songs, as well as the opening line of one of Richard Rolle's devotional letters and, of course, a reference to Bernard of Clairvaux's Sermon 23 on the Song of Songs and the tradition of *Brautmystik*.²⁰⁹

In addition to *ego dormio*, the *Dormitorium* returns to *amore langueo* from time to time, suggesting not only that this treatise was written after the *Scola*, but also that the *Dormitorium* is the second, more advanced, schooltext in a didactic program that began with the *Scola amoris*.²¹⁰ The languor of love leads to the next stage of tension between the body and the spirit, which is the wakefulness of sleep. Methley's *Dormitorium* is an attempt to solve one of biggest problems for contemplatives: what should be done with the body during contemplation? Does the mystic ever leave the body completely behind? How should he mitigate against spiritual turpitude? The *Dormitorium* uses sleep as a test-case for the negation of the body that all contemplatives are called to attain.

Simultaneously, the *ego dormio* forces the contemplative reader to be held morally

²⁰⁹ *Canticum Canticorum* 5:2 as well as McIlroy, Claire Elizabeth, *The English Prose Treatises of Richard Rolle*. (Cambridge, D.S. Brewer, 2004) and Hill, John M. and Deborah M. Sinnreich-Levi, *The Rhetorical Poetics of the Middle Ages: Reconstructive Polyphony*. (Cranbury: Associated University Press, 2000), especially "The Mystery of the Bed Chamber," pp. 73-7.

²¹⁰ *Amore langueo* appears many times in the *Scola* (on 26r, 27v, twice on 31r, 32r, 32v, twice on 34v, 35r, 36r, and 38v) and the phrase "*iubilo et amore prelanguido*" (on 40v, 41v, 42r, 45v, 47v). Norton never once uses the phrase *ego dormio*.

accountable for both his sleeping hours as well as his waking ones.²¹¹ The description Methley gives of this wakeful sleeping in the *Dormitorium* is of two lovers who have chosen to spend the night chatting to each other in that dreamy space between wakefulness and sleep:

Once upon a time I was awake, writing about what you, most generous creator, have given me, wakefully sleeping (*dormiendo vigilans*) in that miraculous experience, for, to the extent that it is possible, I want to make known the glories of heaven which occur in an instant[...] You languish in love of me (*languet amore mei*), and I for you. This languor made me silent, and made me rest in you and not doubt. Now, contrary to the common understanding, this dream was written down in health and not in sickness, and because it seemed to me that, here, in this dream, one man was speaking to another, I have decided to give this little treatise the name *Dormitorium Dilecti Dilecti*”[...] For here I am miraculously equally asleep and awake.²¹²

The *Dormitorium* is, quite literally, Methley talking in his sleep. Methley makes clear that his sleepiness is not caused by infirmity; just like *amore languet*, though it has all of the markers of sickness, it is beneficial to the soul. Methley illustrates the viability of thinking about dormition as salutary, a microcosm or exemplum of inexpressible fraternal love. As a token of this inexpressibility, this conversation, like the ones contained in the *Scola*, is silent.

²¹¹ I will talk in some more detail about the role of sleep in spiritual productivity or negligence in the next chapter on *Piers Plowman*, but the idea that sleepiness is somehow equivalent to spiritual infirmity is incomplete at best: it does not take into account the Rollean tradition, in which sleep is a marker of true proximity to the deity.

²¹² Trinity O.2.56, DDD, fol 25r-v: *Temporibus quidem prioribus, vigilando scribere michi dedisti conditor alme de te: sed nunc dormiendo vigilans per mirabili modo experimentum celestis glorie in quantum michi possibilie est propalare volo, quia cito quia et hoc tu vis: quia languet amore mei, et ego tui. Sed languor iste tacet me dormire et te, et non dubito. Unde secundum vulgare deum, sompnus notat in utrisque sospitatem non infirmitatem, et qui hic ut arbitror uterque ad alterum loquiamur, congerum michi videtur nomen esse opusculi dormitorium dilecti dilecti[...] et ad hoc quo est premirabilius pariter dormio et vigilo.*

Throughout the *Dormitorium*, the focus of the *ego dormio* is on the mystical vigilance of the heart in the form of the sleeping body. But it is not just the *sleeping* body that is addressed through *ego dormio*. The *ego* at rest is a metaphor for *any* type of body engaged in a habitual or required activity that at first seems contrary to the operations of the soul, including liturgical song and the required activities of the monastic life. In other words, “sleep” can be understood here as an iterative, acquired attitude. Like virtue, which is cultivated over time, wakeful sleep is a product of years of careful training. It is a form of obedience, and as such, the *ego dormio* allows Methley – and Norton – to focus on monastic rules and Carthusian obedience, a type of sleep that “excels all others placed before it, because [this virtue] alone perfects men.” Like the sleeper who is awake, the body of the monk becomes inherently obedient; “true obedience, which occurs in the community, and regularly in the singular lover, [...] is highest between the anchorite and God,” says Methley. It turns the lover into charity.²¹³

Obedience to a liturgical rule – and the necessity of singing the liturgy of the hours – is what kept Rolle from taking holy orders and what made his contemporaries, like Hilton, so suspicious of him. What Methley is attempting to do here is bring liturgical obedience in line with euphoric sonic experience.²¹⁴ “Without the regulars and the singulars who are anchorites, or without the recluses who, solely out of obedience leave the solace of human companionship,” Methley says, the virtue of obedience could

²¹³ Ibid, *DDD*, fol 28v: *Est tamen virtus quo omnes excellit omnibus nimirum preponitur, quia sola perficit hominem fortassi dicit aliquis eam esse charitatem. Ego autem dico obedienciam veram; que quidem communiter fit inter regulare singulariter, aut inter deum et eius anacoritam summum.*

²¹⁴ John Norton’s *Musica monachorum* and *Thesaurus Cordium Vere Amantium*, texts that focus explicitly on Carthusian obedience, focus even more stridently on the virtues of obedience.

not be understood. Solitaries and monastics have, by taking leave of the world, fallen asleep to it. They have simultaneously ensured that they exist in a state of continual heightened spiritual awareness. “Who might be able to judge better,” Methley concludes, “and thus truly and not falsely say *ego dormio, et cor meum vigilat?*”²¹⁵ Obedience to a rule, above and beyond Rollean sleep, grants the monastic writer legitimacy to speak about *canor*. Maintaining external requirements – whether these be the requirement on the body to sleep, the requirement of the monk to engage with the liturgy, or the agreed-upon rules of discursive environments every writer assents to – while connecting to hierophanic experience is a special skill. Solitaries, recluses, and monks have been granted the ability to write or about the ineffable because they already have practice in writing from a type of dormition. Words, like monks, require *regulae* in order to express anything at all.

As if to prove his point, Methley follows this passage by breaking out in a troped liturgical quotation: “Glory to God in the highest” (*Gloria in altissimi deo*), he says, and afterwards, “let the earth be at peace” (*ponitur et in terra pax*), “not for the lovers of the world, but to men of good will” (*sed hominibus bone voluntatis*): *ego dormio et cor meum vigilat*.²¹⁶ After intoning the *Gloria* Methley attains a literal break from corporeality:

I saw my heart dance, moving in my chest; and my body, for its part, was rising, and my heart held itself out alone in the heavens, when it left my

²¹⁵ Ibid, DDD, fol. 28v: *Sic ergo sine regularis ut anachorita, vel reclusa sola obediencia vera exuit hominem a solitudine, Et si quid difficile oratur, superioris iudicium requirater, et sic veraciter non fallaciter dicat ego dormio, et cor meum vigilat.*

²¹⁶ Ibid, DDD, fol. 28r-29v: *Gloria in altissimus deo, et consequenter ponitur et in terra pax, non mundi amatoribus, sed hominibus bone voluntatis. Ego dormio et cor meum vigilat.*

body (for it wanted to appear without weight in front of God), I sensed in my breast a feeling as if the body would not be able to move itself through the empty air; and my heart burst out with great force and violence as it reached towards immense joy, deservingly crying out and singing spiritually: *Ego dormio et cor meum vigilat*.²¹⁷

The picture painted here is just as vibrant as any moment in Rolle's mysticism or even in the *Book of Margery Kempe*. For the Carthusian in particular, the body must be left; leaving is the point. If there is no body – and no regular life – to leave, there is no difference, no moment of resonant rupture, no opportunity to heed the voice of God and to be obedient to the call of the beloved.²¹⁸

But before the soul can take leave of the body, Methley (and later, Norton) must be brought to *scola*, to the routinized practice of the songs and movements of liturgical language. How does one engage in obedience to a spiritual calling – including writing sermons or mystical texts – when one is also intent on experiencing *canor*? Methley remarks that the “holy fathers praise god in their hearts, and insofar as they make sermons, in this way the moderni do well... *ego dormio, et cor meum vigilat*.”²¹⁹

²¹⁷ Ibid, *DDD*, fol. 32v: *Et cor corporale mouendo tripudiare michi videtur in pectore, et corpus in hac parte erigere et celo presentare se intime cor cum corpore vel eo relicto solum modo sine pondere cupit apparere deo, sencio enim in pectore qualiter quum non potest corpus totaliter secum ducere per aeris spacia; erumpere et exiliis re magna vi et impetu suauiissimo conatur immenso iubilo, et ideo merito clamans et canens animo: ego dormio et cor meum vigilat.*

²¹⁸ It is also the expressive tendency of a body. Ibid, *DDD*, fol. 40r. *Oculi mei semper ad deum qui ipse euellet de laqueo pedes meos: domine deus quis mortalum semper habet suos oculos ad te directos vel apertos: puto quippe quod consilium dedit et remedium: ut scirem ad perfeccionem tenendam quid sit necessas auris votum.*

²¹⁹ Ibid, *DDD*, fol 44v: *Et ideo sancti patres modo in celo coram deo laudantes, tales suos fecerunt sermones, quales non faciunt moderni licet utriusque bene, Sic nempe et ego quia continue deo gracias: dormio et cor meum tibi vigilat.*

Spiritual labor beyond mere contemplation is possible in those who are truly spiritually “awake.”²²⁰

Methley and Norton were both concerned that spiritual guidance, labor, and dormition be the proper practice of anyone – active or contemplative – who desired to come to a vision of heaven. The reiterative *amore langueo* and *ego dormio* do not just provide the text with an inherent formal musicality, they also provide a speculative landscape in which to experiment with different imaginations of what, exactly, contemplative meaning *means*. Within the framework of their texts, obedience is one of the highest virtues for creating contemplative meaning.²²¹

There are different types of obedience, of course. And Carthusian *canor* is remarkably receptive to these variants. For example, Norton’s first treatise – the *Musica*

²²⁰ The philosophical tradition, after Avicenna and Aristotle, might refer to this faculty as the agent intellect, but the Thomist-Averroist tradition would, I think, see this as a faculty of the soul rather than the intellect. However, in talking of the Carthusian understanding of human psychology, intellect, and attainment of awareness, these sorts of connections should be made tentatively. Suffice it to say, Methley and Norton are attempting to create a means of understanding the operation of the mind relative to the rational awareness of the actions of the mind. See Khalidi, Muhammad Ali, Ed. “Ibn Sina, *On the Soul*,” in *medieval Islamic Philosophical Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 27-32; Aristotle. *De Anima*. Barnes, Julian, Ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); Foster, Kenelm and Silvester Humphrey, Eds and Trans. *Aristotle’s De anima: in the version of William of Moerbeke, and the Commentary of St Thomas Aquinas*. (London: Routledge, 1951).

²²¹ As Bruce Holsinger has noted, music is an instrument of discipline and a construct of obedience, and strict musical discipline of the body on earth ensures *harmonia* after death, in heaven. He cites Hildegard von Bingen. “For I am a *cithara* sounding praises and piercing the hardness of heart with good will. For when a man feeds his body moderately, I reverberate like a *cithara* in heaven [*in celum cithara resono*] with his praises. When he feeds his body temperately with moderate food, I sing accompanied with musical instruments.” Hildegard’s *Liber vitae meritorum* uses somatic harmonies to construct an instrumental understanding of *obedientia*: “I sound like a cithara at the command of his word because I obey all his commands. See Holsinger, Bruce. *Music, Hildegard von Bingen to Chaucer* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 96.

– champions the Carthusian Order and Carthusian obedience above other monastic orders and other types of liturgical awareness, intent on providing a reading of Carthusian obedience as the primary method of attaining equality with the angelic choirs and providing access to divinity. But, let’s imagine Norton working *alongside* Methley during the 1480s, and picture the trajectory of their epistolary friendship. In such an environment, Norton, an eager new Carthusian, would write a treatise on the perfection of the Carthusian life, and then, picking up a proof of Methley’s *Scola* and *Refectorium*, invest himself in an editorial reading of his own text that allowed for broader religious experience. Norton’s second treatise, the *Thesaurus Cordium Vere Amantium*, reflects this shift away from narrow monasticism and into a more general understanding of what obedience might mean to readers in general. “I want the hearts,” Christ says in Norton’s *Thesaurus*:

of those who chastely love me to be my habitation, for they delight to live in me. And in my passion and my pain, I desire nothing of men except the penance of a contrite and humble heart. My spouse, the human spirit, is greatly purified through bitter humiliation of the heart and with other prayers: *Ideo o vos omnes qui laboratis et onerati estis preperate mihi cor contritum et humilitatum et venite ad me et reficiam vos.*²²²

Norton uses the refrain of *O vos omnes* throughout the *Thesaurus*, ending every chapter with it. This is shortened at times to *O vos omnes*, and at other times merely *O vos*; but the *omnes* here explores the different sorts of Christian communities that might be imagined by the mystical expression of *ego dormio*. The *O vos omnes* is a call to

²²² Lincoln MS 57, *TCVA*, fol. 35r: *Volo quia cor eorum qui me caste amant habitacione mea est in quo multum me delectat in habitare. Ideo nichil quero ab hominibus per tota mea passione et pena iusi tuum cor contritum et humiliatum. Quid magis purificatur sponsa mea, est anima humana per amorosam humiliciones cordis quid per oram alia excertitia que ab horem possunt fieri! Ideo o vos omnes qui laboratis et onerati estis preperate mihi cor contritum et humilitatum et venite ad me et reficiam vos.*

community, for *all* who labor to find the peace of Methley's *ego dormio*. Carthusian textuality is a way to try out different ideas about who can properly be called a "mystic," "contemplative," or "obedient" – even, perhaps, who might be an *ego*.

The *O vos* provides another point of evidentiary contact between Methley and Norton as well: the reader who had already seen Methley's Trinity manuscript could be forgiven for, on a first reading of Norton, thinking of Methley's *Lamentations* rather than the *Psalms*: in the final treatise he penned, Methley invoked an *O vos* – *O vos omnes qui transitus per viam* – in a discussion of the edification of the church through the example of the death of Christ, and includes the refrain of *amore langueo*. Norton's *O vos* sets up the expectation of a repetition of Methley's liturgical *O vos* – an *O vos* understandable to those who have performed, and who have memorized, the line from the Tenebrae service that Methley quotes. Norton shifts the meaning and the intentional community of Methley's *omnes* away from those who labor in prayer to all those who labor in reading the *Thesaurus*.

The first time in Norton's text that the *O vos omnes* refrain appears, Christ repeats the invocation to "*omnes*" three times to three different groups of obedient readers:

First, to perfect solitaires, you who follow me, leaving all the consolation of the world to come to solitude, desiring no consolation but me alone; Second, to the religious and to the servants of the church, who do much work for me; and third to all those who love me, whether they are spiritual or temporal, so long as they love me and do works of charity and set a good example to others, *et cetera*.²²³

²²³ Ibid, *TCVA*, fols 35r-v: *Et hec verba dixi tripliciter ad amatores meos: Primo ad te o soliterie perfecte qui secutus es me ab omni solacione mundano ad solitudinem nullum solatum desiderans preter me solum. Secundo dixi vobis o omnes religiosi et ecclesiastici qui multum per me laboratis et cetera. Parcio dixi hec verba prescripta ad vos o omnes amatores mei tam spirituales quoniam temporales qui per amore meo laboratis in operibus caritatis ostendentes bona exempla ceteris et cetera.*

The invocations Christ proffers neatly divide labor, and obedience, into three categories which would have been familiar to any medieval devotional reader: the active, contemplative, and mixed lives.²²⁴

Whereas Norton's *Musica Monachorum* applies only to religious, and primarily to Carthusians, the *Thesaurus Cordium Vere Amantium* uses the technique of the repeated refrain (which Norton himself acknowledges in his use of the *et cetera*) to champion Carthusian spirituality within a wider socioreligious milieu.²²⁵ Norton combines the plaintive desire for the beloved's presence (*amore langueo*) with spiritual rest (*ego dormio*) into the cry of Christ: *O vos omnes qui laboratis et onerati estis, venite ad me et ego reficiam vos*; he also suggests that each person should read his text as it applies to his

²²⁴ Ibid, TCVA, fol 28r: *Verba ante o vos et cetera quamvis precipue sint ad solitarios, tamen preterea sunt ad omnes et pastores et religiosos, et tercio ad omnes spirituales et temporales exercentes opera caritatis.* William Melton's prologue highlights the non-contemplative use value of Norton's treatise: *Propterea duo quia nulla bona voluntas neque caritatis, neque oratio, neque supplicatione neque inclinacione in ecclesia ob reuerenciam corporis mei et prelatorum et seniorum neque confessio.* (Ibid, TCVA, fol 35r).

²²⁵ Christ's discussion of his unique connection to the solitary is predicated on sacramental theology. Ibid, TCVA, fol. 34v: *Ego dixi qui manducat meam carnem et bibit meum sanguinem in me manet et ego in eo. Hoc est qui audit clamorem meum et humiliat cor suum caste per veram penitenciam in perfectu contricionem et reuerenter me accipit secundum formam sponse mea. Sine dubio recipunt eum et manebit in me et ego in eo et adducunt eum ad palacium meum est regium celeste et reficiam eum secundum amorosam voluntatem suam refeccionem eterna ubi nunquam esuriet nequam scilicet in eternum. Et nolite intendere incantacionibus alicuius incantantis quo acerbant me in multis cordibus hominem et defamat fidem catholicam.*" The text opens with Christ speaking to his beloved, describing the ways in which he lived as a human – his humanity is integral to the ways in which he is capable of refreshing and caring for the reader of the work – similarity and identification is necessary. The affective attachment that the solitary ought to have is contrasted with the siren-like song of false Christians. This is one of the notices that we get in the treatise that it is, in fact, a product of the 15th century, and had a manuscriptal afterlife up into the Reformation period.

own vocation.²²⁶ In this way, Norton uses the *Thesaurus* as a space to imagine who the “*omnes*” are, how they come to be defined as such, and how they might read his text.²²⁷ Having read his Methley, Norton appropriates some of Methley’s stylistic features while maintaining the thematic investment in primarily solitary spirituality by focusing, throughout the rest of the *Thesaurus*, on the proper practice of contemplation. Of course, this inclusiveness is tempered by hierarchy; although the treatise inscribes all of Christianity, the most perfect life is always the contemplative.

For Norton, who seems to have read and reread his own text as well as Methley’s, obedient contemplative practice is cumulative. Note the words he uses to describe devotional reading: “bit by bit” (*eodem et eodem*) and “gradually” (*paulatim*).²²⁸ William Melton, extolling the virtues of the solitary life in the introduction, also undersatnds obedient reading to operate like this, saying that he copied the treatise “little by little” over a long period of time.²²⁹ He, too, counts himself among the “*o vos omnes qui laborant*” who have attained the heights of perfection through the diligent application of devotion, and who understand what it means to work “without ceasing” or “without interruption.” But one can be both solitary and monastic, a writer and a reader.²³⁰

²²⁶ Ibid, *TCVA*, fol 69v: *Non omnes in hac vita uno modo trahuntur ad perfecciones, suis virus sic alius sic et alius aliter qui vero fideliter in ea vocacione quia vocatus est.*

²²⁷ Ibid, *TCVA*, fol 31r.

²²⁸ Ibid, 27v, 48v, and 71r, respectively.

²²⁹ Ibid, *TCVA*, fol. 284: *Sequitur libellus ab eodem et eodem tempore editus[...] et merito quia in eo spirituale thesaurum invenire potest diligens et deuotus lector.*

²³⁰ Norton goes into some great detail describing the mechanics of this. Ibid, fols. 48r-48v: *Pura contemplacio in magnitudine amoris desiderii consummit omnes cognitiones et intellecciones in tempore contemplandi, et facit animas contemplancium puriores et clariores crystallo per excellentissimo casti amoris desiderio, adhuc propter maiorem animi tui intellecciones eo quia minus sapiens es. Nota castissime in corde mundo, quia sicut post solis ortum aliquum in die clarissima apparent stelle et luna et subito postquam*

The images incorporated in the margins of the text suggest this as well, as folios 40v-41r include not only the *o vos omnes* refrain, but also a marginal drawing of a spiritual ladder – another gesture to hierarchical thought and mystical ascent.²³¹ Through a calculus of virtues, the heart gradually climbs the rungs of salvation. Meditating on the angels, focusing on pure confession and true penitence, being attentive to the mother of God, and accepting Christ as the bride of the soul are all spiritual works that require a long duree of attentiveness. The infinitessimals of devotion – the quanta of spirituality – accumulate like snow on a field; practical, daily commitments to spiritual labor are accomplished “bit by bit” over the course of a lifetime. The *quanta* of salvation, in turn, become the quantified resonances of the musical scale so that

the heart sings continuously in chaste love; it constrains demons, rejoices in this purging, and liberates the soul from many pains, and gives the angels and saints in heaven along with all the blessed spirits, having proffered great and marvelous praise[...] and thus it makes a noise of the taste of heaven and sweetly speaks of divine delights his petitions, and enduring in God without diminution.²³²

The Latin here takes part in a mimetic tunefulness. Its alliteration is reminiscent of Rolle’s and Methley’s investment in the minutiae of verbal song – alliterating is, perhaps, the *smallest* way in which one can represent a tunefulness in prose, a performative formality of the verbal:

sol ad feruorem aliquam tendit euanescunt stelle et luna, et quasi non fuerant erunt abscondite ab oculis hominum ante meridiem, et eciam cito post solis occasum et forte ante sicut exquirat tempus apparent stelle et luna ad illuminandum noctis obscuritatem scilicet verus amator cum ad contemplacionem seipsum perfecte properat, et in ea dulciter occupatus fuit mox ab eo recedit multiplicitas temptationum, et cogitationeum et paulatim ascendit ab omni cognitione alicuius entis me adiuante.

²³¹ Ibid, *TCVA*, fol 42r-42v.

²³² Ibid, *TCVA*, fol. 43r.

*Quia quociens cordialiter cantatur continue in cordibus caste amancium demones contristat, purgandos letificat, et multos a penis liberat, angelis et sanctis in celis cum omnium lidatorum spiritum agminibus magnum et mirabile gaudium prestat... Et sic facit eos celico sapore sonare suas peticciones, et dulciter dilicijs diuinis ditare, et in deo durantur sine diuimucione.*²³³

Go into the confinement of the cell of silence, and all of your senses will be made mellifluous solely through love of me, and heartily sing to me in chaste love with a song of amen, without motion, marveling that your knowledge of any created thing – both of your soul and your body – has been captured through meditation on my passion.²³⁴

This song of the heart, represented as alliterative quanta, has one more – incredibly important – characteristic. It is silent. Norton’s themselves present the ultimate form of obedience as they morph into melody.

Though the Carthusians are atypical among monastic orders in the amount of time granted for silent devotion, Methley and Norton still had to invent ways of harmonizing liturgical duties with mystical exuberance. Though Methley and Norton were able to practice contemplation more consistently than, say, a Benedictine monk might have been able, they experienced *canor* as part of liturgical obedience. Unlike Rolle, they did not have the option to retreat from the duties of the monastic life. “While putting on my vestments,” Methley says,

a very small beat [*unus ictus*] of music of incredibly languid sweetness was sent into me along with the delight of all delights, which seemed to

²³³ Ibid, *TCVA*, fol 43r.

²³⁴ Ibid, *TCVA*, fol 44v: *Ideo dico o dulcis fili constantur age in custodia celle silencii et sensum tuorum per solo amare meo mellifluo, et cane me cordialiter in casto amore cum cantu ameno sine motu merorum in omnibus artibus tuis et anime et corporis et sine respectu alicuius creature cordialiter capto multifare meditando de mea passione.*

me particularly special, for before I had languished and sung with many wandering words.²³⁵

Methley goes about his daily routine, putting on his monastic robes and preparing for mass, yet this does not impede his ability to sing. This song is given in a moment; an entire piece of music is granted in an *ictus*, a short space of time in which the monk can divert his attention away from liturgical duties. A staccato beat of musical time becomes a point of mystical meditation during the celebration of the liturgy.

Like the *ictus*, Methley's *ego dormio* is a point of meditation; Norton's *o vos omnes* is a version of the same, defining the intersection of the body and the soul and the types of labor each is capable of doing.²³⁶ As Norton loses cognitive awareness, the carefully drawn distinction between soul and body evaporates. It is not that the soul *surpasses* the body, but instead that both the soul and the body, liturgical duty and spiritual calling, are indistinguishable at the point of mystical rest:

O sweet son, if you spurn your cell for me alone, chastely singing to me with a contrite, firm heart without false humility and thinking with perseverance on my loving passion, you will quickly – and suddenly – have a taste of that pleasing heaven of sweetness, which is dripping with that sweetness which was spoken of before.²³⁷

Norton and Methley's form of obedience was, after all, Carthusian, and both would have spent most of their time alone in their cells, reading each other's texts rather than

²³⁵ Trinity MS O.2.56, DDD, fol. 32r: *Vestibus indutus nichilominus unus ictus perlanguidi dulcoris a dilecto dilecto immissus me cogit specialius quia prius et languescere et canere quid multis vagabor verbis.*

²³⁶ Lincoln Cathedral MS 57, TCVA, fol. 44r: *Et sic cito sensies gustum mee melliflue mansuetudinis sensibiliter signatum in tuo corde cum caritate continna crebre cremante.*

²³⁷ Ibid, TCVA, fol. 44r-v: *O dulcis fili si cellam spernes pro me solo caste canendo me cum corde contrito et firmiter sine fictione humilitato, perseuerantur pensando mei passionem amati cito et subito sencies gustum amenum celico dulcore dictatum mirum in modum magnificantem mentem prius magno merore madidani.*

interacting with one another *viva voce*. Methley even refers to himself as a hermit, performing an “alleluia[...] in the wilderness.”²³⁸ He reiterates the importance of mystical moments away from the mass elsewhere:

There I was, not during mass, but while I was sitting quietly in my cell or my stall, and it was as if I had been pushed into a lovely field, singing and languishing quietly, and desired I would not languish but die in that moment. How wonderful would that moment be in which I would pass from life to the glories to come! This is not the care of men of God within time, because when they believe they are singing psalms, their ears are walking about, but I was able to exist both in the moment of death and in a moment of great consolation.²³⁹

This looks almost exactly like Rollean *canor*: Methley does not experience the force of angelic song during the mass. And so, even though *canor* is delineated as part of liturgical performance, it also occurs in a state of profound solitude.

For instance, when he returns to earth, the solitary lover – this time, Norton – is able to praise God without breaking off (*gaudium ineffabili sine fine*), no matter what his earthly duties might be.²⁴⁰ Norton calls this new spiritual place the “dinner-party of heaven” (*civibus celorum*), again, as a nod to Methley’s *Refectorium Salutis*.²⁴¹ There, says Christ, “I will retrieve [the true lover] from the machinations of evil, and he will remain in my mansion with ineffable praise without end, firmly founded with ineffable,

²³⁸ Trinity MS O.2.56, *DDD*, 37v: *Carmen non lugubre flebilis nec lamentaciones et ve sicut pocius alleluia canam qui inueni quodammodo quod quesui in heremo.*

²³⁹ *Ibid*, *DDD*, fol 31v: *Et hinc est qualiter non in misse tempore sed in cellule quiete ad terram siue stallum vel eciam in orto supra gramina compellor quiescere canens ac languens utinamque ulterius non languerem sed merore morerer in momento. Quam pocius de morte presentis vite transire ad vitam glorie future; non est cura homini dei de tempore, quia cum se putat psalmodizare, ad auram ambulaturus meridie ut michi contingerit indius tercius per magnum tempus pocius morti quam orti solacio presentetur.*

²⁴⁰ These short phrases are taken from the argumentation on 45r-46r.

²⁴¹ Lincoln Cathedral MS 57, *TCVA*, fol. 46v. This may also be a reference to Rolle *and* to *Piers Plowman*, with its dinner scene in B.XIII.

everlasting praise.”²⁴² Like the *amore langueo*, which is all the more pronounced because of the absence of the beloved, moments of solitude are structured by the way in which obedience to the liturgy is fulfilled. “There is nothing sweeter than to live well without interruption, and without cessation,” Methley says:

And therefore I was taken into such unexpected praise, and even into the ground, where I thought about how I would be lead there by death, for the writings of scripture say that “you do not know the day or the hour when the son of man is coming,” and truly [...] nothing would be sweeter than to live well without interruption or ending, waiting for you.²⁴³

Within the Carthusian cell, the sound of *canor* is experienced beyond the confines of the body. After attaining the height of experience, the mystic should “always have the interior eye crucified in your heart, always singing,” in an “ineffable happiness which cannot be recounted, no matter how much literature or language is spilled in recounting these musical notes.”²⁴⁴

The solitary is most capable of tuning in to the sweet mellifluousness of song and to exist both without interruption and “without motion,” but this does not mean it is the

²⁴² Ibid, *TCVA*, fol. 46r: *Et in suo aduentu inueniet me cum tota celesti curia ei obuiam, ut inueniam eum a machinis malorum, ut maneat mecum in mea mansione cum gaudio ineffabili sine fine firmiter fundata.*

²⁴³ Trinity MS O.2.56, *DDD*, 38r-v: *Et ideo quia tantu in gaudium et tam inopinatum et tociens humi quem tum a morte distulisti, cogitauit mecum de hac scriptura que dicit quia quia hora non putatis filius hominis veniet, si vero[...] nihil melius quam bene uiuere absque interpolacione et sine cessacione te exspectando.*

²⁴⁴ Lincoln, Cathedral MS 57, *TCVA*, fol. 45r - 46v: *Habere oculi interioris hoc est crucifixum in corde semper me canere, quia in mee passionis memoria[...] O vos omnes qui laboratis et onerati estis venite ad me et ego reficiam vos, et uerbi non tum audient me suis et videbunt me facie ad faciem cum ineffabili leticia quorum retribucio non est dicenda pro nimio munero neque notanda litteris et linguis omnium ancium.* I have interpreted “ancium” as “a group of musical notes” despite its rarity in medieval Latin due in part to the context, though in the spelling *antium* it can refer to anything grouped in a row. Some dictionaries, for instance, refer this word to a flock of geese.

only life that leads to contemplation.²⁴⁵ Methley even goes so far as to suggest that some devout worshippers may have experience of heaven *per considerationem creaturem*, by considering earthly things.²⁴⁶ Carthusian *canor* has room in its understanding of mystical experience to allow for multiple paths to the deity: some are long, some are short; some are within the confines of liturgical experience, others beyond it. Methley and Norton are capacious, understanding a broad world of mystical approaches ranging from the cataphatic to the apophatic, from the regular to the secular, from the active to the contemplative. Again, this is the *o vos omnes* of Carthusian *canor*:

You have been permitted to experience a special gift of god, in sensible or tangible fashion, listen, O, lovers of the world (*amatores mundi*), listen to the testimony of God and the conscience of the fire of love, which is burning so sweetly that the senses believe that it is hot when it is cold, and summer in the winter, for this angelic song blossoms forth from true lovers, just as the earth sings with blossoms in the spring, and it is possible to know one by the other.²⁴⁷

When Methley, at the end of the *Dormitorium*, describes his own mystical experience, he does not articulate whether it is sung out loud or in his mind, whether his own experience of *canor* came about *per considerationem creaturem* or through pure intellect. He gives only the time and frequency of its incantation:

This is the song that I sing in the morning:
Jesus, Jesus, Jesus,
Jesus, Jesus, Jesus,

²⁴⁵ Ibid, *TCVA*, fol. 48r ff.

²⁴⁶ Trinity MS O.2.56, *DDD*, 33r: *Quidam quippe ut nouelli discipuli christi claustrales heremi qualiter cultores excitant deuocionem per considerationem creature.*

²⁴⁷ Ibid, *DDD*, fol 33v: *Et promitto tibi experte eius speciale donum immo sensibilem quam tangibilem amorem habebis; Audite o amatores mundi, audite teste deo et consciencia ignis amoris velut res redolens pre nimia suavitate, tam sensibilis est ut cognoscatur quam quis vellet discernere inter frigus et estum in yeme et estate. Sed et canor angelicus tam verus est in vere amantibus, sicut terrestris melodia cum canitur a invenibus in sue flore inventutis, sicut possibile unum scire eorum sic et alterum.*

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus
I languish for love.
[...] and insofar as I was taken, fluidly, into light, and lost in the affect of
the angels in love and jubilation and love (which I enjoyed), I had frequent
visions like those I mentioned before.²⁴⁸

Methley refers to his prayers invoking the Holy Name as coming “from the heart”

(*egreditur corde meo, et ingreditur dicit dominus in cor meum*).²⁴⁹ But what seems most
important to Methley is that, through obedience, Christ speaks directly to the beloved in a
way expressible in textual form.²⁵⁰ The power to sing is the power to think, and then to
transcribe.²⁵¹

In her reading of Methley’s *Scola*, Katherine Zieman calls Cathusian *canor*
integumental: only the initiated can understand it. Of course, this chapter is in partial
agreement with Zieman; Methley and Norton read and knew and interacted with each

²⁴⁸ Ibid, *DDD*, fol 34v, 48v: *De carmine et cantico in auror*:

Iesu iesu iesu
iesu iesu iesu
iesu iesu iesu
[...]

*In tanto quippe gaudio affluebam priusquam in lucem rapere tempore perdicio quod
quodammodo effectus angelicus amore iubilo et amore prelanguido fruebar, dei visione
clarius tum frequenti visitacione raptus predicti.*

²⁴⁹ Ibid, *DDD*, fol 36r: *Egreditur corde meo, et ingreditur dicit dominus in cor meum*.

This formulation brings to mind the Aquinian and Augustian discourse of modes of
speech and signification in relationship to angelic speech. See Goris, Harm. “The Anglic
Doctor and Angelic Speech: The Development of Thomas Aquinas’ Thought on How
Angels Communicate” *medieval Philosophy and Theology*. 11 (2003), pp. 87-105.

²⁵⁰ Ibid, *DDD*, fol 45r: *Et vide et ecce deus Jesus Christus super montem excelsum valde
stetit, ita ut mirarer montis altitudinem, et respiciens in faciem Christi mei quia
specialiter diligo eum absque ceterorum dumtaxat despectu voluntatem eius vidi que fuit
huiusmodi: stetit astutem in vertice montis ut possit prospicere de longinquo ac
avidissime desiderabat accupere quid in sequentibus dicetur, et ego hoc sciens absque
eius verbo quia vidi sicut dixi quid volebat spiritum desiderium suum dixi ei inspiritu:
domine quid vis habere: cor meum cor tuum ait volo habere, hec ex non verbis sed in
intellectu sonuit meo qui sint illuminatus.*

²⁵¹ Ibid, *DDD*, fol. 45v: *Tunc utque ipse per gratiam peccatum remittet et amorem
infundet ita ut singuli dicatis amore langueo et iterum ego dormio et cor meum vigilat.*

other, and without understanding how they interacted, their mystical experiences can only be incompletely understood. But this ineffability is the case with all mystical experience – indeed all experience of any sort – and prior reading determines the degree of intimacy one may have with a text, whether it is mystical or not. However, the exclusivity of these texts is not as pronounced as Zieman makes it sound. As already discussed above, the *Scola Amoris*, the *Musica Monachorum*, and the *Dormitorium* foreground the performance of *canor* with a textual and liturgical means for understanding their use, purpose, and meaning.

Carthusian Song: Staccato Notes

Amore langueo, *ego dormio*, and *o vos omnes* highlight structural and stylistic similarities between Methley and Norton, including their approaches to *canor*. By following these phrases within the Lincoln and Trinity manuscripts, one gets an overview of both men's mystical programmes. Carthusian *canor* can be understood by these structural elements just as Carthusian life delimited – and enabled – contemplative practice through its liturgy: read in silence, the connective tissue of *ego dormio*, *o vos omnes*, and *amore langueo* provides each text with logical ligaments; these connections are especially important because, at times, the argumentation from chapter to chapter is only tentatively wound. The repetitions also do something else: despite the vagations of their content and the choppy logical connections between one chapter and another, they enforce a sort of formal constraint on the reader, obliging him to be obedient to the text.

But there are moments where both Methley and Norton break out of this formal education, some of which we have already seen: the effusive poems at the end of the

Scola, or Norton's prayer at the end of the *Lamentatio*.²⁵² Methley and Norton also both express the ecstasy of *canor* in the form of short repeated mantras, the sort of phrases that would be familiar to any student of the *Cloud of Unknowing*. Ranging from single syllables (A! A! or O! O!) to the Holy Name (*Jesu! Jesu!*) and from pleas (*Audi!*) to substantives (*Amor!*), this proximate repetition reiterates the formal import of the more distant Latin refrains – i.e. “*ego dormio*” – while stressing the importance of performance as contemplation itself.

In the chapter on “The vehemence of love and of languor felt by the author during the feast of St Peter in Chains,”²⁵³ Methley provides both text and gloss for the ecstasy to follow. “Love,” he says, and desire for the beloved took me into heaven spiritually, so that nothing was able to separate me from God as I savored him.”²⁵⁴ A marginal gloss provides extra help in determining just how the body and the spirit take leave of each other. “The body is corrupted, and it aggravates the spirit and suppresses it to the earth because of the habitation of the senses with many thoughts.”²⁵⁵ Both the senses and rational thought weigh down the spirit, which flees the body:

Then I spoke some words, crying thus: *a. a. a.* with my voice, at the same time, believing myself to be in danger, and thus I said *in manus tuas* either out loud (or, which I think is closer to the truth) in my spirit.²⁵⁶

²⁵² Ibid, *SAL*, fol. 7r; Lincoln Cathedral Library, Lincoln MS 57, *DL*, fol. 86v.

²⁵³ Ibid, *SAL*, fol. 7r.

²⁵⁴ Ibid, *SAL*, fol 7r: *Amor et desiderium dilecti susceperunt me spiritualiter in celum, ut preter mortem nil mihi decsset (inquantum sapio) de gloria dei.*

²⁵⁵ Ibid, *SAL*, fol 7r: *Quia corpus quod corrumpitur agrauat animam et deprimit terrena mihi habitacio sensum multa cogitantem.*

²⁵⁶ Ibid, *SAL*, fol 7r: *Verbum loqui sicut clamant a. a. a. in hac voce simul volentes intelligi periculum suum, sic ego secundum meum deo deicens in manus tuas aut vocaliter aut (quam magis puto) spiritualiter.*

At first, Methley says, he thought that this overwhelming feeling was a physical one; he believed a fire entered his cell, and he cried out, “Come, and help me!”²⁵⁷ Methley mistakes spiritual experience for physical. But readers, *already* taught by the *Scola* that the “*a.a.a*” is a cry of divine inflatus rather than physical fire – for anyone who might have forgotten, the marginal note at this point says “because of the fervor of love, the voice of the lover is carried away,” – will know all they need to: the *a.a.a.* is potentially voiced, but more likely voiceless, as the lover’s capability for vocal expression is carried away along with his spirit.²⁵⁸ Even Methley has trouble defining the boundaries of this event; he gives the situation to the reader to interpret. With what did he cry “A?” and with what mouth did he say “*in manus tuas?*”

Methley gives the answer a few folios later:

And whether I cried out vocally or spirituality (which I think was more likely), I became an invalid due to the languor of love, and I believe I thought these words, forming them in my heart: *amor. amor. amor.* And lacking that form I had desired I was totally able to exhale, *a. a. a.* then either like I was singing, or, rather, as if I were crying out in my spirit in praise.²⁵⁹

The text sets up a test-case for the reader, a chance for her to discern the presence of *canor* on her own, to interpret *a.a.a* for herself, and to see if she has made her own

²⁵⁷ Ibid, *SAL*, fol 7r: *Et sicut qui periculum metuunt ignis. non clamant ignis innasit domum meam. venite et adiuuate me. quia in angustia vel potius agonia piti? vix possunt vuum? uerbum loqui sicut clamant a. a. a. in hac voce simul volentes intelligi periculum suum. sic ego [marginal gloss: Quia feruo amoris. plerumque ipsam eciam vocem aufert amanti.] secundum meum modulum.*

²⁵⁸ Ibid, *SAL*, fol 7r: *Quia fero amoris, plerumque ipsam eciam vocem aufert amanti.*

²⁵⁹ Ibid, *SAL*, fol. 7r-v: *Aut vocaliter. aut (quam magis puto) spiritualiter, sed inualescente languore amoris vix cogitare potui formans in spiritu hec uerba . amor . amor. amor. O tandem deficiens ab hac forma exspectaui quam totaliter spiritum exspirare possem. a. a. a. tummodo aut consimili modo canens potius quam clamans in spiritu per gaudio.*

contemplative practice conform with Carthusian *musica celestis*.²⁶⁰ This is why, when Norton repeat his own penitential *a.a.a*, he does so only *after* he has read Methley's text, written two treatises – one monastic obedience (the *Musica*) and the other on visionary experience (the *Thesaurus*) –, and nearly completed a third (the *Lamentatio*). Only then does Norton exclaim in Methlian fashion:

O virgin and mother of all, most powerful lady and most wise and most benign, Listen, Listen, Listen, Listen, Listen, Listen, Listen, and Listen to me (*Audi. Audi. Audi. Audi. Audi. Audi. et exaudi*), the my most lamentable and heartfelt lamentations, and lead me away from my body.²⁶¹

Just as in prior treatises, where *O vos omnes* and *amore langueo* had taken hold in the lover, here it is *Audi* – shortened to *A* – that takes precedence, and along with it, the refrain *educ me de corpore isto* or “lead me from this body,” a petition that occurs twelve

²⁶⁰ This *a.a.a*. is not the real experience, but exists in a symbolic relationship to it. The ego is other-identification and its fragmentation in the moment of identification of the other. The marginal notations perform this same function, mirroring the text back to itself. John Norton and Richard Methley, too, are in an epistolary relationship with each other, in a sort of friendship where the two writers mimic and reflect each other in writing. From the end of the eleventh century to the fourteenth, epistolary manuals became the central handbooks for rhetoric, and the idea of writing as a form of speech, or letter-writing as rhetoric, was central to education. According to early 12th-century letter-writing and letter-writing theory, a letter should be divided into five parts: the *salutatio*, the *captatio benevolentiae*, the *narratio*, the *petitio*, and the *conclusio* (a formal greeting, an attention-grabbing section, a background, a request, and a conclusion). Most letters were designed to be read aloud to the recipient rather than to be read quietly, the letter-writing manuals of the *ars dictaminis* focused on the sound of spoken sentences. Katherine Zieman discusses the “death” of the monastic economy at the hands of the chantry. Well, there was also a “death” of the *ars dictaminis* at the hands of its own hyperformalism. It seems to me that one of the differences between pastoral care and the art of letter writing is that the one neglects these forms and the other absorbs them, although there is obviously an introduction at the head of this text. See Richardson, Malcolm. “The *ars dictaminis*, the Formulary, and medieval Epistolary Practice.” in *Letter-Writing Manuals and Instruction from Antiquity to the Present* in Poster, Carol and Linda C. Mitchell (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), pp. 52-6.

²⁶¹ Lincoln Cathedral MS 57, DL, fol. 83r: *O virgo et mater et omnium domina potentissima sapientissima et benignissima . Audi . Audi . Audi . Audi . Audi . Audi . et exaudi me lamentabilitur et cordialiter clamantem ad te et educ me de corpore isto.*

times in the *Lamentacio*.²⁶² The final time the body is mentioned, Norton asks that the virgin allow “this body be dissolved into ineffable stuff.”²⁶³ As with the ostenatos of *amore languero* and *ego dormio*, Norton has learned how to contemplate from Methley’s text.

In Norton and Methley’s treatises, the *a.a.a* of *canor* can be many things. By shortening the language of love to a single syllable, the Carthusian authors are not merely following the *Cloud of Unknowing*’s dictates to “Take[...] bot a litil worde of o silable[...] for ever the schorter it is, the betir it acordeth with the werk of the spirite.”²⁶⁴ The *a. a. a.* allows the word of the spirit to be a floating signifier, one that, like the tension between the body and the spirit, gains its significance through the unresolved tension between unisyllaby and polysyllaby, through *Amor*, *Audi*, and *A*. When Methley calls out, he is crying *Amor, amor, amor* (and yet we don’t know this immediately, but only later does he explain to us that the *A* is evocative of *amor*). Norton’s *A*, on the other hand, is vocative: *Audi*. One *a.* is imploring, the other euphoric. The play of spiritual expression is a play on language that is understood by those who have read the text’s continual reappropriation of repetitive terms, from the *a.* to the *amore languero*.

Spiritual Friendship

²⁶² Ibid, *DL*, fol. 83r. “*Educ me de corpore isto.*” Three times on 83r, three times on 83v, twice on fol 84r, and once on fol 86r, 87r, 91v, 92v.

²⁶³ Ibid, *DL*, fol. 93r-v: *Quia ab isto corpore dissolui desidero ineffabiliter et esse cum christo ihesu dulcissimo filio tua quam quero quem diligo quem ineffabilissime clare secuti est videre cupio Et tunc audiui vocem domine mee dulcissime et matris misericordissime mihi valde dulciter dicentem. O fili dulcis ne timeas pondorositatem et vilitatem carnis tue. Quia nunc exaudita est lamentio tua magna et eciam scripta est in celo in libris angelorum coram deo.*

²⁶⁴ *CUnk*, ll 500-1.

What distinguishes the Carthusian stream of *canor* from its Rollean undercurrent? Methley and Norton's musical delectation manifests as the ineluctable transformation of physical matter at the *apex mentis* of spiritual exuberance. For Rolle, this was an experience that took place primarily in solipsism and self-love, one that precluded interaction with the outside world. While the facts of Rolle's autobiography belie this narrative – Rolle's roll as a pastoral and epistolary mentor suggests a less heremitic life than works like the *Melos Amoris* present – Rolle obviously understood his own mystical experience as primarily solitary. On the other hand, what we see in the Carthusian record is quite the opposite: although Norton and Methley belonged to what was effectively an order of hermits, the Trinity and Lincoln manuscripts are fundamentally *social* texts intent on forming relationships: between the solitary and his own interior life (a subjectival awareness), between the author and his readers (in this context, a tradition of spiritual care), and between Methley and Norton specifically (a relationship that was both fraternal and friendly). Methley and Norton wrote and constructed their mystical diaries as collaborative efforts, and Methley and Norton are distinguished from their Rollean foundation through spiritual friendship.²⁶⁵

Where Trinity O.2.56 ends with Rolle – “a sensible fervor which promised to delight me frequently in languor, just like the dear Richard of Hampole.”²⁶⁶ – it begins

²⁶⁵ We should think of this not only as plugging in to the medieval tradition of authorization, but also on contemporary discussions of the “social text” and the death of the author. May want to theorize more on the social text later. The tradition of mystical writing and monastic traditions of spiritual friendship, or *spirituali amicitia* is part of nearly every monastic tradition, though it is most commonly associated with the Cistercians.

²⁶⁶ Trinity O.2.56, RS, fol 55v-56r: *Cumque missam finissem, iterum atque iterum defeci totus languidus effectus nam vita mea consistit in amore languore dulcore feruore,*

with *amicitia*. “For all created things,” the opening line of the *Scola Amoris Languidi* says, “the height of learning is to love and be loved.”²⁶⁷ This little aphorism on mutual love is easy to pass by, a throw-away phrase on the way to more adventurous discussions of languor and ecstasy. But it is, in fact, more than this. In this passage, Methley brings his mystical treatises into a discussion on friendship that goes back, through Augustine and Cicero, as far as Aristotle’s *Nichomachean Ethics*. The types, benefits, and virtues of friendship within a discussion of the contemplative, solitary life of the Carthusian are complicated, imbued with a special sort of rigour, but in order to get at them, one must look briefly at the longer tradition.

For Aristotle, friendship (*philia*) existed in three distinct forms: between those people who use each other for personal profit or utility, those who are friends because of the joyfulness or emotional delight they produce in each other, and those friends who were enjoyed, mutually, in abstract terms. The last of these, the most virtuous, lead to *eudaimonia* and perfect happiness, in large part because it was not dependent primarily on personal happiness, but rather on a sense of self-sacrifice, sufficiency, and the greater

canore, rarius tamen in sensibili feruore quia dilectus michi promisit quod frequencius in languore sicut et ille almus Ricardus dictus de hampol frequencius in calore de quo non legi quod tam frequens fuerit in languore.

²⁶⁷ Ibid, SAL, fol 1r: *Omnium creaturum summum studium est amare et amari*. Later, in the *Dormitorium Dilecti Dilecti*, Methley will discuss his vocation in terms of connecting with a replete world, “*Ut quid plane quia amore langueo: ut digneris me tua vocacione sancta de mundo ad teipsum per teipsum: propter teipsum pre nimia dileccione tua omnio omni modo bono in quantum possibile est decet et oportet in unione omnis creature tecum in ordine suo, et spiritum hoc modicum quomodo sentire possum propter exemplarem sanctitatem tocius mundi*” (fol. 32r). There is a bookmark at this line, suggesting that this sentence was held in some high esteem by at least one of its readers. To love God through a holy vocation, and the world in yourself through yourself, and on account of yourself to have dilectation of the whole world insofar as it is possible and proper, and to bring all creatures into a union with the order, and thus to have a sensation of the whole world.

good.²⁶⁸ This lead Aristotle to say, near the end of the *Nichomachean Ethics*, that only good men, equal in status, and who “mutually recognize [each other] as bearing goodwill and wishing well to each other for one of the aforesaid reasons” can be true friends.²⁶⁹ Perfect friendship requires a reciprocal love of the Good along with the Other, to see in the Other “another self.”²⁷⁰

Three-hundred years later, Cicero appropriated Aristotle’s friendship-as-ethical-good for his own purposes in the *De Amicitia*. “Nothing is more delightful than a return of affection, and the mutual interchange of kind feeling and good offices.”²⁷¹ And when Augustine, with Cicero in mind, retells his life as one conditioned by mutual love, he both appropriates and critiques the classical tradition of friendship constituted by ethical obligations towards the pagan “good.” For Augustine, the classical definition friendship is dangerous. “What delighted me,” Augustine says of his pagan childhood, “if not to

²⁶⁸ Pangle, Lorraine Smith. *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship*, ed. John von Heyking and Richard Avramenko (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Classen, Albrecht and Marilyn Sandidge, eds. *Friendship in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age: Explorations of a Fundamental Ethical Discourse* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH and Co, 2010).

²⁶⁹ Aristotle. *Nichomachean Ethics* Barnes, Julian, Ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).VIII.2-5.

²⁷⁰ *Nichomachean Ethics* IX.4

²⁷¹ *Nihil est enim remuneratione benevolentiae, nihil vicissitudine studiorum officiorumque iucundius*. For Cicero, writing in the context of the tumultuous Late Roman Republic rather than the Athenian *demos*, friendship was inherently political: people unequal of status could not be perfect friends, for one would always be in the others’ debt. Still, he found space for true happiness within friendship. This mutual affection, Cicero goes on to claim, is most powerful in those who are alike; and therefore, the good love the good and attach them to themselves as though they were united by blood and nature (*ut bonos boni diligant adsciscantque sibi quasi propinquitate coniunctos atque natura*). See Cicero, Marcus Tullius. *De Amicitia*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1923), I.14.

love and be loved?”²⁷² As Augustine reflects on the possibilities of friendship within a specifically Christian context, he laments his childhood friends: these were not connections of souls with souls, but were instead the fragile lineaments of bodily affection, “exhaled in murky clouds of concupescence of the flesh.” The young Augustine could not “discern serene delectation from the clouds of libidinal desire.”²⁷³ In a Christian context, proper friendship is about knowing when to draw boundaries and when to break them down: corporeal self-identity must remain even as spiritual distinction disappears. A true friend is a second self, and the duplication of Self in the Other necessitates that some subjectival difference remain between friends no matter how spiritually connected they are. In the Augustinian sense, *amicitia* is about *dilectio* – dilectation and delight, yes, but also about *election* and choice – about rational thought and the careful cultivation of mutual interest.

What keeps the Christian friend-pair from collapsing into erotic love is the simultaneous, overarching love of God that guides it. Aelred of Rievaulx (d. 1167) provides perhaps the most moving and complete reading of this type of love – spiritual friendship – in *De Spirituali Amicitia*. As an abbot of the Cistercian order, Aelred harmonized the human desire to form close interpersonal bonds with the Benedictine injunction to do just the opposite.²⁷⁴

²⁷² *Et quid erat quod me delectabat, nisi amare et amari?* See Augustine. *Confessiones*. O'Donnell, James, Ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 2.2.2.

²⁷³ *Exhalabantur nebulae de limosa concupiscentia carnis et scatebra pubertatis, et obnubilabant atque obfuscabant cor meum, ut non discerneret serenity dilectionis a caligine libidinis* (Ibid, 2.2.2).

²⁷⁴ The problems associated with friendship within the monastery were many: close personal bonds could cause favoritism, and in turn rancour, amongst a group of men who were supposed to be in harmony at all times. See McGuire, Brian Patrick. “The Charm

How could, Aelred asked, a cloistered man form close personal bonds without disrupting the social order of the monastery, or worse, falling into “unnatural” carnal desire for his friends? The dangers of specific friendship were many, and the Benedictine Rule and its followers go into some detail on the dangers of particular friendship.²⁷⁵ In *De Spirituali Amicitia*, Aelred presents three discussions – one dialogue and two trilogues – in which this problem is solved. He defines friendship, outlines its benefit, and teaches the monks under his care how to maintain friendships in perpetuity, even after death.²⁷⁶ The Cistercian view of friendship as modelled by Aelred was the going form for monastics in the medieval period. In Aelred’s conception, it is a form of rational love that exceeds all other types of human love, even that of charity. Love of friends in this system should always be subordinated to, or mimic, love of the deity; God becomes a spiritual safeguard against the corporeality that threatened to turn stoic appreciation of the Other into a sinful desire for it. Using God as a router, friendship is able to connect Self to Other without the sensual danger of physical lineaments. Friendship is above charity,

of Friendship in the Monastic Institution: A Meditation on Anselm and Bernard.” in *Institution und Charisma*. Felten, Franz, Annette Kehnel, and Stefan Weinfurter, Eds. (Vienna: Bohlaus Verlag, 2009), pp. 425-36.

²⁷⁵ One of the chief sources for the monastic reticence towards particular friendship is Cassian, who in his sixteenth conference on *De Amicitia* elides Christian friendship into a broader discussion of Christian charity. It is difficult not to do this, of course, for all Christians – unlike their pagan ancestors – have available to them a discourse of charitable, perfect love in the image of God that is easily abstractable from particular love of an individual. Classen, Albrecht and Marilyn Sandige, Eds. *Friendship in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age: Explorations of a Fundamental Ethical Discourse* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), p. 41.

²⁷⁶ Rueffer, Jens. “Aelred of Rievaulx and the Institutional Limits of Monastic Friendship.” *Perspectives for an Architecture of Solitude: Essays on Cistercians, Art and Architecture in Honour of Peter Fergusson*. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), p. 55-62. Ambrose’s *On the Duties of the Clergy* is another significant text behind *De Spirituali Amicitia*.

and spiritual friendship above other kinds, though “somehow the spiritual is obscured by association with other friendships, which rush in and noisily greet those who seek and desire a spiritual friendship.”²⁷⁷ When Richard Methley opens his book – *The School of the Languor of Love* – with the quotation on mutual love, he is explicitly configuring his text within the rubric not only of *amor*, but of *amicitia*, at the center of which is God. “No one,” he says, “loves well if he does not truly love God as a trinity, and the trinity in unity and all that is created, and love it on account of God.”²⁷⁸

The main points Aelred makes in support of friendship are these: 1) true friends love with a bond more powerful than *caritas*, because charity is due to everyone, whether or not the object of love returns one’s affection; the love that binds spiritual friends is mutual and recognized as such, which makes it more perfect; 2) mutual love is a simulacrum of the love which exists between the perfectly obedient Christian and God;²⁷⁹ 3) following this, true friendship is impossible without true knowledge of God; 4) the goal of spiritual friendship is to mirror heavenly love in human relationships. In addition to this, spiritual friends must speak honestly with each other, and correct each other when

²⁷⁷ “*Non sit tibi molestum inter tot amicitias, illam quam spiritualement ad differentiam aliarum credimus nominandam, quae illis quodammodo involvitur et obscuratur, et illam quaerentibus et desiderantibus occurrunt et obstrepunt, ab earum, ut ita dixerim, communione secernere; ut illarum comparatione clariorem eam nobis, ac proinde optabiliorem faciens, ad ejus nos acquisitionem vehementius excites et accendas.*” See Aelred of Rievaulx, *Über die geistliche Freundschaft: lateinisch, deutsch*. Nyssen, Wilhelm, Ed. (Trier: Spee-Verlag, 1978).

²⁷⁸ Trinity MS O.2.56, *SAL*, fol 1r. *Nemo bene diligit nisi qui deum amet in trinitate et trinitatem in unitate diligit et omnia que creata sunt, debito respectu propter deum diligit.*

²⁷⁹ The coming of Christ allowed for a fuller manifestation of friendship than in the pagan world. Where Cicero only knew of four pairs of *true* friends, Christian friendship pairs exist in the thousands: the perfect sacrifice of the martyrs, who are “of one heart and one soul,” Acts V, “*Multitudinis credentium erat cor unum et anima una: nec quisquam aliquid suum esse dicebat, sed erant illi omnia communia?*”

they have fallen into error. Aelred encourages obedience as a means to true, charitable love. “A friend,” says Aelred elsewhere in his writing, “is someone you let into the secret chamber of your mind by the bonds of charity.”²⁸⁰ By following these precepts, *spirituali amicitia* not only perfectly sees the Self in the Other and the Other in the Self while maintaining proper physical boundaries, but is also a perfect means of discovering God, one by which the monk climbs the rungs of theophanic experience. “Was it not a foretaste of blessedness thus to love and be loved,” says Aelred:

to help and thus to be helped; and in this way from the sweetness of fraternal charity (*fraternae caritatis*) to wing one’s flight aloft to that more sublime splendor of divine love (*dilectionis divinae splendorem*), and by the ladder of charity now to mount to the embrace of Christ Himself; and again to descend to the love of neighbor (*amorem proximi*), there pleasantly to rest? And so, in this friendship of ours, which we have introduced by way of example, if you see anything worthy of imitation, profit by it and advance your own perfection.²⁸¹

The spiritual friend ascends from fraternal charity to the dilection of Christ – a form of mystical indwelling that retains rational properties – and back to the lateral love of the

²⁸⁰ *Quem uinculis caritatis in illud secretarium tuae mentis inducas.* This comes from *De speculo caritatis*, III.39,100. Baldwin of Canterbury (d. 1190), a Cistercian monk and Abbot of Ford, in Devonshire, later Bishop of Worcester, and friend to Aelred of Rievaulx makes similar remarks in the *De Requie Quam Sibi et Nobis Christus Quaesivit et Paravit*. The mutual love of monastic friendship is represented here as useful, as sweet; it is both commerce and repayment – it is economic. Like Aelred’s formulation, it is a representation of the higher social bonds of heavenly love, of desire for and of God. Like the celestial hierarchy, in which the higher angelic orders participate fully in the blessedness of the lower, and the lower partake, or have a share in, the perfection of the higher, can be understood to be part of a relationship based on commerce.

²⁸¹ *Nonne quaedam beatitudinis portio fuit, sic amare et sic amari; sic iuvare et sic iuvari; et sic ex fraternae caritatis dulcedine in illum sublimiorem locum dilectionis divinae splendorem altius euolare; et in scala caritatis nunc ad Christi ipsius amplexum conscendere, nunc ad amorem proximi ibi suaviter repausaturum descendere? In hac igitur amicitia nostra quam exempli gratia inservimus, si quid cernitis imitandum, ad vestrum id retorquete profectum.* See Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship* III.127.

brother. The similarity to Pseudo-Dionysian mystical and ecclesiastical hierarchies is not superficial; Aelred imagines spiritual friendship as the functional operation of theophany.

We see the same tendency in John Norton's *Musica Monachorum*, in which obedient profession to the Carthusian order mimics the obedience maintained by the celestial hierarchies.²⁸²

Now, when you love god and honor him for his natural divinity, I know then you speak to my spirit, but you will not be angry, if I say *amore langueo*, because it is certainly not accidental that you love me and I love you, but love each other is the cause that either of us is part of the other.²⁸³

As well as on the nature of *amore langueo* itself: *Amore Langueo* is about not just about loving God, but about engaging in a fraternal care for the Br(Other) The use of the "you" in his treatises suggests that our mystic is concerned with speaking to someone who has taken monastic vows. In Norton's mind, pure obedience is comprised of elements that provide for the operation of spiritual friendship:

Charity (*caritas*) is the matter of all salvation and all good works; wisdom (*sapiencia*) is the operation of this matter and is instrumental in its manifestation, and love (*graciously amor*) burns and is the most perfect of all these material works.²⁸⁴

Caritas (matter), *sapiencia* (form), and *graciously amor* (substance), combine to form Carthusian obedience. The resonance of charity, love, and wisdom is a form of perfect friendship manifested in the proper regulation of behavior. Again and again these terms

²⁸² Lincoln Cathedral Library, MS 57, *MM*, fol. 12v-16r.

²⁸³ Trinity MS O.2.56, *DDD*, fol 41v: *Nam quod tu cupis honorem ext natura diuina est, scio quippe quomodo loqueris, et loqueris michi in spiritu modo, sed queso ne irascaris, si[...] quia amore langueo, certe non accidentaliter sunt causa quare vel tu me vel ego diligo te, sed amore tuus utriusque causa est scilicet ex utraque parte.*

²⁸⁴ Lincoln Cathedral MS 57, *MM*, fol 12r: *Caritas materia totius saluationis et omnium bonorum operum est. Sapiencia vero operatum illius materie et instrumentum operandi et manifestandi opera eiusdem. Et graciously amor ardescent est claritas coniunctione et perfectione uniuersorum praedictae materiae operum.*

appear in relation to each other, limning the boundaries of *spirituali amicitia*: charity, obedience, and love. It is difficult *not* to read the entirety of the *Musica monachorum* – structured around obedience and attaining heaven – as Norton’s attempt to define principles of sociality and friendship within a solitary life. The Carthusian who obtains equivalence with the *chorus angelorum* becomes a *spiritualis amicus* with the angels.²⁸⁵ Obedience to the solitary life leads to communal inclusion, as evidenced within the manuscript.²⁸⁶

Methley, too, is concerned with monastic obedience, rapture, and how this obstructs or confounds sociality. How does one obtain mental tranquility in *languor*, he asks, while also fulfilling the obligations of the Carthusian office? And how does obedience allow for friendship? Methley’s *Scola Amoris Languidi*, like Norton’s, makes obedience the center of solitary practice:

You will be able to fulfill this [your rule] without grave impediments, because you are one who is working alone, but not alone: the one who is working in you makes you capable. You are not able to do anything without him and so, in a sense, everything you do is done by him, and on account of him, and, moreover, you want to know how you might fulfill your office and complete the circle of obedience, without doing what is necessary for the body, or what has been established as touching on charity, so that you might then be raptured into heaven.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁵ Ibid, MM, fol. 5v: *Sine dubio si caste perseuerant ambo in celis gloriose coronabuntur et in benedictionem mea sine fine gaudebunt cum angelis et sancits celorum in seculam sempeterna.*

²⁸⁶ Ibid, MM, fol 20r.

²⁸⁷ Trinity O.2.56, SAL, fol 5r: *Et tu sine graui impedimento potes implere, tu illus per ipsum facies. Quia ipse est qui operatur in te et velle et posse. Nichil potes sine ipso, ergo quodammodo ipse omnia agit in te, et propter te, hic autem intelligere te volo, quia omnia debita officia tua implebis sine fuit circa obedienciam, sine proprie corporis necessaria, vel raterne caritati contigua. Et si tu tunc in celestibus raptus esses.*

Obedience is necessary for true spiritual friendship. The unification of the self with the *corpus mysticum* or monastic body is reminiscent of Aelred, who says that God

determined that peace should guide all his creatures and society unite them. Thus from him who is supremely and uniquely one, all should be allotted some trace of his unity. For this reason, he left no class of creatures isolated, but from the many he linked each one in a kind of society.²⁸⁸

In other words, friendship is most perfect in the self-sufficient – an ideal traceable back to Aristotle – self-sufficiency and solitude are *not* identical to loneliness.²⁸⁹ Although the solitary eschews communality, he does so in order to reach the ordered *unitatis* of sociality.

In the *Dormitorium Dilecti Dilecti*, Methley discusses the possibilities for friendship based on solitary spiritual fervor. “I thought that I had found a comrade in my reading, but now you remove yourself from me, and I fear you have put me in harm’s way; I beg you to return.” Christ answers Methley’s spirit, responding with the familiar refrain: “I do not leave or forsake you, for I languish in love.”²⁹⁰ Although the interlocutor – the friend – is Christ, we could be mistaken for initially imaging that the *sodalem in lecto florido* was the reader, or perhaps John Norton. Though the friend here

²⁸⁸ Aelred of Rievaulx, *De Spirituali Amicitia: Ipsa itaque summa natura omnes naturas instituit, omnia suis locis ordinavit, omnia suis temporibus discrete distribuit. Voluit autem, nam et ita ratio ejus aeterna praescipsit, ut omnes creaturas suas pax componeret, et uniret societas; et ita omnia ab ipso, qui summe et pure nus est, quoddam unitatis vestigium sortirentur. Hinc est, quod nullum genus rerum solitarium reliquit, sed ex multis quadam societate connexuit.* (PL.0667A-B) See also *Speculum caritatis*, 1.21.61.

²⁸⁹ “The solitary person’s life is hard, since it is not easy for him to be continuously active all by himself; but in relation to others and in their company it is easier.” (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1170a6–8)

²⁹⁰ Ibid, *DDD*, fol. 42r: *Putabam me inuenisse sodalem in lecto florido et nunc vis recedere a me committens me periculo et differens a petito. Quod inspirati? Non dimittam nec derelinquam te, quia amore langueo.*

is Christ, by imitation any “accomplice” in activity can be seen as a friend.²⁹¹ Through obedience and charity, spiritual friendship with Christ becomes not just possible, but the exemplum from which all friendship formulates itself, a friend who works with the solitary in a continual spiritual engagement.

And there is one virtue which is placed above all the others, and which alone perfects men, and this is charity. Moreover, I say, true obedience which commonly occurs between the regular and the singular, or between God and the anchorite, I say, moreover, that the experiment of the solitary is above earthly kings, and he will have no equal in this mortal life in terms of his true obedience.²⁹²

Charity is not merely true obedience, but the two are *one and the same thing*. In addition to this, Methley elides Norton’s architectural distinction between charity and obedience (in which obedience is comprised of charity, wisdom, and love). Carthusian friendship seems predicated not merely on charity, but on deontologic logics of obedience to a rule. The extent to which obedience is about retreating into solitude, it is also the means of achieving intersubjectivity.²⁹³ This is why, perhaps, all of the treatises in the Lincoln and

²⁹¹ From Cassian, in his sixteenth conference (*De Amicitia*) to Augustine, Cicero, and Aelred, friends who were distant from each other – or even dead! – were still considered to be friends. In fact, many of the monastic friendships outlined in the literature are pen-pals rather than proximate bodies. See Slater, Isaac. “*Exuberantissimus Amor*: Cassian on Friendship.” *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 44.2 (2009): 129-144.

²⁹² Trinity O.2.56, *TCVA*, fol 28r: *Est tamen virtus quo omnes excellit omnibus nimirum preponitur, quia sola perficit hominem fortassi dicit aliquis eam esse charitatem, ego autem dico obedienciam veram, que quidem communiter fit inter regulare singulariter, aut inter deum et eius anacoritam summum, dicam ergo quomodo didici experimento solus dicendum est rex super omnes mortales, et ipse pariter mortalis qui nullum habet parem in vera obediencia.*

²⁹³ Derrida makes a long argument about the politics of friendship and its inherent dangers. The friend, as Other, no matter how firmly identified with Self, is always in danger of becoming the enemy. Friendship is political, and the political operation amounts to making friendship possible. Responsibility has something to do, in this world, with friendship, and the vocative call in the treatise what Derrida would call a

Trinity manuscripts are, in part, dialogic: they let the mystic and his readers know not only that he is not “alone,” but, what’s more, to know that he is God’s friend.²⁹⁴

Friendship is specific to the individuals involved. But friendship, as outlined above, is also abstract and fungible: any two Christian solitaries in possession of Norton and Methley’s text could be exchanged for any others. And, although Norton and Methley lived side by side, the only traces of their relationship appear in manuscripts in which neither mentions the other by name. Classical and medieval critiques are largely silent on the role that mutual activity plays in solidifying friendships, and the spiritual friendship between Methley and Norton is a sort of limit-case: the time given them to speak, bounded as it was by cell-walls and the strictures of the Carthusian rule, would have consisted almost entirely of refectory time, sung mass, and Sunday walks: liturgical time.

Carthusian song is Rollean in that its corporeality interferes with physical song, but the Carthusian mystic has a means of avoiding the critical interference between noumena and phenomena: it *requires* its practitioners to withdraw into solitude for long periods of time. Carthusian cells were essentially “private monasteries” and Methley’s emplacement tells us a lot about the way in which the entire space of the Charterhouse

“messianic teleiopoiesis.” See Derrida, Jacques. *Politiques de l’amité* (Paris: Editions Galiléé, 1994), p. 235.

²⁹⁴ “Too much love separates, interrupts, threatens the social bond,” because getting too close always leads to rupture (Derrida, *Politiques de l’amité*, 256). And so this is, perhaps, one of the ways in which this Carthusian dialogue is the *most* friendly one there could possibly be: the participants rupture with the world in order to converse with Christ, and afterwards, shaken but not destroyed by this intimate connection with Christ, go on to recount their behaviors to each other in stunningly intricate detail. This is the most non-heremitic thing I can imagine.

was used.²⁹⁵ This is why, Methley in particular structures his treatises around social spaces: he is making up for the lack of sociality through a social text. We should, in this sense, imagine the textual exchange represented in Lincoln and Trinity as about friendship, but, more importantly, performing friendship through epistolary exchange, no matter the distance. Norton understood this, as his *Thesaurus* suggests the possibility for the reunion of the soul with its beloved friends after death:

Therefore they will be called blessed who labor [against their flesh] unto death, when they will be joined, even if it is from across the alps, in chaste love and in the time of their death they will exist in pure contemplation without iniquity.²⁹⁶

This contemplative communion of saints is represented in the “open” journals of Norton and Methley, as they respond to each other while simultaneously providing readers beyond the cloister walls a chance to engage in a similar relationship.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁵ The Carthusian cell is “a two-story house, with an entry passage, living room, study, bedroom, oratory on the ground floor and with a work room above. The cell is set in the corner of a garden and is surrounded by walls about 10 feet tall. Monks typically threw their garbage out of their second-story window, and in excavations of Mount Grace, we can tell from the garden detritus just which cells were responsible for which parts of book production: Cell 8 was a bookbinder, Cell 10 and 11 produced pen nibs, Cells 12 and 13 colored pigment.” See Burton, J and K Stöber, eds. “Make straight in the desert a highway for our God – Carthusians and Community in late medieval England,” in *Monasteries and Society in the British Isles*. Studies in the History of medieval Religion 35. (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2008), pp. 168-179. With this evidence at hand, it is impossible to imagine the book production of Mount Grace, and its attendant mystical expression, as anything other than a product of an entire community humming with an audible rhythm of material force. The sense that we get from the archaeological evidence, when mixed with the archival record, is of a sort of infinite choice.

²⁹⁶ Lincoln Cathedral MS 57, *TCVA*, fol 50r: *Ideo beatissimi vocantur qui in hoc opere usque ad mortem iugiter transalpinati fuerunt in amore casto, et in mortis sue tempore erunt puri contemplatii sine aliqua iniquitacionem.*

²⁹⁷ For instance, Bonaventure used the word *communicatio* to signify the bond uniting two people through charity (*lex caritatis*) in contrast with the law of society (*lex socialis*). See Dunn, John, and Ian Harris, Eds. *Aquinas, Great Political Thinkers, Vol. 4*. (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 1997), p. 93. In this one phrase, Bonaventure connects

Carthusian mystical song is more highly social than its Rollean foundations – the mystical diaries that John Norton and Richard Methley produced show an indebtedness to the tradition of spiritual friendship, and their scribes and their readers show that they are invested in a long-standing relationship to the texts at hand. In the opening to the *Musica Monachorum*, for instance, the scribe writes:

This was written by Brother Flecher, and you know that I did not rush forward indiligently to have looked over this little book, but with great favor and fraternal charity which is given to us by turns may it conserve in the eternal god and the lord Jesus Christ our redeemer. Amen.²⁹⁸

Fraternal charity combines the highest forms of friendship with the copying of the manuscript – the text itself is a means to friendship. Carefully copying out the text is not just a monastic duty, but a friendly one. The manuscript is the congener by which true friendship is expressed, with Christ as the ternary, stabilizing figure.²⁹⁹ Remember that Methley’s other treatises are written for specific men: *The Epistle of Hew Hermite* to a young hermit living near Mount Grace (whose Latin was apparently not good enough to read a work of spiritual guidance in Latin), and the Latin *Cloud of Unknowing* as well as

obedience with love and, beyond this, with the language. Aelred of Rievaulx talks in some detail in Book II of the *De Spirituali Amicitia* about maintaining friendship at a distance, and many of the great “friendships” of the medieval period can be discerned through the *ars dictaminis*, or the epistolary genre. See also Rueffer, Jens. “Aelred of Rievaulx and the Institutional Limits of Monastic Friendship.” *Perspectives for an Architecture of Solitude: Essays on Cistercians, Art and Architecture in Honour of Peter Fergusson*. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), p.55-62; Camargo, Martin. *Ars dictaminis, ars dictandi*. (Turnhout: Brepols, 1991); Murphy, James Jerome. *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974.)

²⁹⁸ Lincoln, Cathedral Library MS 57, MM, fol. 2r-v: *Hec scripsi frater flecherus ut intelligas me libellum tuum perlegisse non prorsus indiligentus. sed cum grato favore et fraterna caritate, quam nobis Invicem conseruet in eternum deus et dominus redemptor noster ihesus christus amen.*

²⁹⁹ Ibid, MM, fol. 27v: *Sequitur libellus ab eodem et eodum tempore editus.*

Marguerite Porete's *Mirror*, to Thurston Watson, a confrere at Mount Grace who was eventually transferred to Hull, where he died in 1505.³⁰⁰ Friendship requires mutual caring, intimacy, and shared activity, and all three of these things are found in the Carthusian conception of *canor* as well.

The two manuscripts at the center of this chapter get at the song of angels by manipulating *canor* through a filter of obedience, solitary activity, charity, and liturgical action. This is why, getting back to the beginning of this chapter and the (very) late invocation of Rolle as the inspiration behind Carthusian *canor*, Methley took so long to reference him: the mystical song of the Carthusian monastery is about more than Rollean withdrawal into the self: it is about withdrawal into the other, the spiritual friend.

It is tantalizing to imagine Norton and Methley passing their respective fascicles off to each other in such a setting. "What do you think," one might have said, "of this?" The other, "I dined with the angels last night!" And there is a sort of collegial one-upmanship at work in their various texts, a sense of mutual influence. At the end of the *Scola Amoris Languidi*, Methley addresses his readers:

³⁰⁰ Logan, Francis Donald. *Runaway Religious in medieval England*, C. 1240-1540. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 49. One Thurstan Lofthous, identified as Thurstan Watson, is recorded as having left the Cistercians of Kirkstall and transferred to Mount Grace before 1489. A papal mandate exists from 23 February 1489, but he was allowed to remain a Carthusian. The only known manuscript of Methley's *Cloud and Mirror* survives in Cambridge, Pembroke College, MS 221, in the hand of William Darker (d. 1512) a Carthusian of Sheen. See Doyle, A. I. "William Darker: the Work of an English Carthusian Scribe." *medieval Manuscripts, their Makers, and Users*. (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2011).

I hope that I have been both orthodox and catholic in this work, but if it necessary that this treatise be corrected, if please you, o scribes, do it, so that you can praise me in continual song: *quia amore langueo*.³⁰¹

We can imagine Norton, his brother, taking him up on the offer.

³⁰¹ Trinity MS O.2.56, *SAL*, fol. 21v: *Gracies mei orthodoxi et catholici, si necesse sit opus hoc corrigite, si vobis placuerit, scribite, mecum precor dem imperpetuum laudate: quia amore langueo et cetera.*

CHAPTER THREE

Liturgical Appropriations, Part 2: *Piers Plowman* and the Charity of *Musica Celestis*

William Langland's *Piers Plowman* begins as the narrator, Will, dons the cloak of a shepherd – or perhaps a sheep – and steps out into the green rolling hills of the Malvern countryside:

In a somer seson, whan softre was the sonne,
I shoop me into shroudes as I a sheep were,
In habite as an heremite unholy of werkes,
Wente wide in this world wondres to here.³⁰²

In the seven-thousand lines that follow, the narrator falls asleep a number of times, and as he does, he meets figures who fulfill his desire, which is not to see, but, rather, to “hear” the wonders of the world.³⁰³ In doing so, Will suggests, from the opening lines of the poem, that an allegorical form without the power of speech is a voiceless effigy, a mnemonic lacking the sound that gives it life beyond the imagination.³⁰⁴

³⁰² See Langland, William. *Piers Plowman*, Ed. A.V.C. Schmidt. (London: J.M. Dent, 1995), B.P.1-4

³⁰³ Will falls asleep a total of nine times; one of these times, he is already asleep. See Langland, William. *Piers Plowman*, Ed. A.V.C. Schmidt. (London: J.M. Dent, 1995).

³⁰⁴ Quintilian, would say that the person who looked at images without paying attention to their attendant speech was a fool. Allegorical figures are (*mutam effigiem*), or mute idols. See Quintilian, Marcus Fabius. *Institutio Oratoria*. Trans. H.E. Butler. Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University press, 1920), VI.I.32. *Allegorein* – a speaking out loud – is an ethical mode of reading in which the conscious acceptance of the effect of words, and the duty to accept words as affective and effective, is placed upon the reader. “The reader of allegory is required to be almost impossibly self-conscious of his behavior as a reader. The choice posed by this crushed self-consciousness is often, as Barthes explains of the writerly text, either simply to reject or to accept the text; but in his rejection or acceptance, the reader of an allegory does not merely reject or accept a text, he embraces or denies his own capacity for rejecting or accepting meaning as a coherent unifying truth, or as a coherent unifying untruth. The choice is not aesthetic but ethical. Here are the echoes of song: allegories reify words, and in turn the poetic line of *Piers* provides a carrier for sound that embeds within the communal ear. In her work on medieval allegory, Maureen Quilligan focuses on the

Later, when Ymaginatif tells Will that Kynde Wit and Clergie, two types of knowledge, come respectively from sense-experience and from personal instruction, he ends his example with a Biblical flourish: “*Quod scimus loquimur, quod vidimus testamur.*”³⁰⁵ For the medieval theologian, there were some things that could be known about the world through particular sense experience (represented in *Piers Plowman* as Kynde Wit), and some things that required revelation (expressed as Clergie). A form of pedagogic tension and between forms of knowledge exists in *Piers Plowman*: Studie comes from reading and living in the world, where empirical truth gives access to spiritual truth.³⁰⁶ Clergie is different.³⁰⁷ It requires the presence of a live teacher and an active student ready to attend, to answer the call to learn, so that when Ymaginatif says

punning nature of allegory to avert an ideational collapse; perhaps it is best not to stress the importance of puns for allegory too strongly, as her views are unique. In the Middle Ages, when allegorical texts were used for oral recitation, the puns which form the basis of the narrative could be sensed as true puns with meanings connected by auditory likeness, not merely strained spelling. This auditory effect does not detract from, but rather adds to the verbal emphasis of the narrative’s action. See Quilligan, Maureen. *The Language of allegory: Defining the Genre*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), especially p. 241.

³⁰⁵ John 3:11, See Langland, William. *Piers Plowman*, Ed. A.V.C. Schmidt. (London: J.M. Dent, 1995), B.XII.64-67

³⁰⁶ Reason governs the senses while recognizing that its operation depends on the presence of God, and Truth, as a higher power. See Karnes, Michelle. “Will’s Imagination in *Piers Plowman*” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*. 108:1 (2009): 27-58. She is referring to Augustine’s *De libero arbitrio* II.17 here. ““in Aristotle’s thought, truth resides within nature and is discovered through nature, not symbolically but actually. Nature accordingly becomes the object not just of the senses but also of the intellect” (32).

³⁰⁷ Like Samuel ready to answer the call of the Lord: 1 Samuel 3:1-4: “*Puer autem Samuel ministrabat Domino coram Heli, et sermo Domini erat pretiosus in diebus illis: non erat visio manifesta. Factum est ergo in die quadam, Heli jacebat in loco suo, et oculi ejus caligaverant, nec poterat videre: lucerna Dei antequam extingueretur, Samuel dormiebat in templo Domini, ubi erat arca Dei. Et vocavit Dominus Samuel. Qui respondens, ait: Ecce ego.*” In the night, when the visible world is invisible, it is the voice that reveals. See also Zeeman, Nicolette. *Piers Plowman and the Discourse of Desire*. (Cambridge: CUP, 2006).

that “we speak of what we know [and] testify about what we have seen,” he is suggesting that Clergie is transmitted through the instruction of a living voice, and teaching is only fully realized in the moment of oral, and aural, transmission. Sound is a necessary component of Christian learning and associative reading.³⁰⁸

From Poverty to *Anima* and from *Activa Vita* to Studie and Clergie, *Piers Plowman* and Will’s dreamscape teem with allegorical forms keen to give voice to the world, to engage in dialectic with the dreaming Will, and to regale him with the marvels of a postlapsarian Christian community attempting to come into harmony with itself. As Will searches for Dowel, Dobet, and Dobest, the figures propose continuously shifting, assembling, and disassembling versions of the Christian *corpus mysticum* as they tell, and retell themselves, sometimes in the guise of musical performance.

Piers Plowman has meaning, quite literally, because Will gives an ear to its wandering images, and the sound of music fills *Piers Plowman’s* pages as a result.³⁰⁹ Sometimes this music looks like mystical song: Hope’s horn trumpets “*Deus, tu conversus vivificabis nos*,” a quotation from the celebration of the Resurrection on Holy

³⁰⁸ Ymaginatif’s function as the “spokesman of Reason” has a long but vexed tradition in *Piers Plowman* scholarship. See Kaulbach, Ernest N. “The *Vis Imaginativa* and the Reasoning Power of Ymaginatif in the B-Text of *Piers Plowman*.” in *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*. 84:1 (1985): 16-29.

³⁰⁹ The medieval referent for this sentence comes from two places. First, from Quintillian, who uses the phrase *mutam illam effigiem* in his *Institutio Oratorio*. See Butler, H.E., Ed and Trans. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), VI. l. 32-33, and the second from Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria Nova*, Ernest Gallo, Ed and Trans. *The Poetria Nova and its Sources in Early Rhetorical Doctrine* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), ll. 2022 and 2036.

Saturday;³¹⁰ beggars are “Goddes glemen” and “minstrales” that manifest opportunities for practicing charity;³¹¹ priests and parsons hunt with *Placebo*; Charity sings the Psalter;³¹² the liturgical quotations of the final three passus appear in the moments that Will gets closest to an understanding of Dowel, Dobet, and Dobest and to the Christian community, figured sometimes as the *corpus mysticum*.³¹³ Sometimes, however, like Jakke the Jogelour and Robyn the Ribaudour, singers are dastardly; *Activa Vita* – one of the text’s most ambivalent figures – is a minstrel.³¹⁴ Music within *Piers Plowman* mirrors the relationship the medieval period had to music in general: when music brings listeners into an awareness of heavenly truth, it is salutary; when enjoyed for its own aesthetic merits, it is dangerous.³¹⁵ As in theology, so too in *Piers Plowman*: there is no unified ethics of music in Langland’s work.

³¹⁰ See Langland, William. *Piers Plowman*, Ed. A.V.C. Schmidt. (London: J.M. Dent, 1995), B.V.507-8; see also the note to Pearsall, Derek, *Piers Plowman, an Edition of the C-Text*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), C.VII.152.

³¹¹ Ibid, B.IX.104; B.XIII.436-560.

³¹² Ibid, B.V.507, B.III.311-2, B.XV.194b.

³¹³ Ibid, B.V.507, B.IX.104, B.XIII.437-452, respectively.

³¹⁴ Jakke the Jogelour and Robyn the Ribaudour are, along with Jonette of the Stuwes, among the catalogue of workers who will not receive the food farmed by the commons. Although the “minstrel” as a type partially overcomes its typical negative medieval connotation, it remains a fraught, or indeterminate term. This is partly because the minstrel’s work is rooted in his body, and the image that the body creates in performance is prone to cross-contamination between other, similar bodies, whether japeres and janglers, goliards, or hypocritical, ignorant priests (“overhuppers”). In this sense, the minstrel, always housed in his body, is always dangerously close to falling into a negative type (Ibid, B.VI.70-73; B.P.33; B.XIII.437-457; B.XIII.225, B.III.11).

³¹⁵ Augustine’s relationship with the Church, through music, comes to mind again, the moment Augustine recounts in his *Confessions* serving as the most famous example of the type: *Verum tamen cum reminiscor lacrimas meas, quas fudi ad cantus ecclesiae in primordiis recuperatae fidei meae, et nunc ipsum quod moveor non cantu, sed rebus quae cantantur, cum liquida voce et convenientissima modulatione cantantur, magnam instituti huius utilitatem rursus agnosco. ita fluctuo inter periculum voluptatis et experimentum salubritatis magisque, adducor; non quidem inretractabilem sententiam proferens,*

How then does song, in all its ambivalence, create a means for Will to understand Dowel, Dobet, and Dobest, and through them, the “commune,” the unity of the Church?³¹⁶ And what does this have to do with *musica celestis*? Music, when couched in allegory, takes on the character of allegorical reading: it emplaces the reader in an affective and referential relationship, first to the demands of the text, and then to the Christian community and an expansive mode of associational reading. *Piers Plowman* understands language as a “socially inflected theory in which linguistic meaning inheres strictly in practical use.”³¹⁷ It is colloquial, episodic, and highly saturated with metaphor; but, most importantly, it emphasizes a retrospective analysis of experience that is, at its core, contemplative. This can be seen in the evolution of Will throughout the text, and it can also be seen in its views on music. When Will sets out in the prologue, his initial auditory aspiration is towards music as an aesthetic object in and of itself, the type of experience Augustine, and Catholic theology, denigrated. He wants to “hear wonders.” But, within *Piers*’ shifting allegorical landscape, this initial desire is also transient.

Within the allegory, song itself transmutes Will’s desire so that, by C.V.1-104, he is

cantandi consuetudinem approbare in ecclesia, ut per oblectamenta aurium infirmior animus in affectum pietatis adsurgat. tamen cum mihi accidit, ut me amplius cantus quam res, quae canitur, moveat, poenaliter me peccare confiteor, et tunc mallem non audire cantantem. ecce ubi sum! flete mecum et pro me flete qui aliquid boni vobiscum intus agitis, unde facta procedunt. nam qui non agitis, non vos haec movent. tu autem, domine deus meus, exaudi et respice et vide et miserere et sana me, in cuius oculis mihi quaestio factus sum, et ipse est languor meus. See Augustine. *Confessiones*. O’Donnell, James, Ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), X.33.

³¹⁶ See Langland, William. *Piers Plowman*, Ed. A.V.C. Schmidt. (London: J.M. Dent, 1995), B.P.117 and B.XX.75. Will’s unrelenting search for a Christian community under any number of names and instantiations – “commune,” “unity,” “Holy Chirche,” and even Piers Plowman himself – is perhaps the single most important unifying principle of the poem.

³¹⁷ Tolmie, Sarah. “Langland, Wittgenstein, and the End of Language.” *YLS* Vol. 22 (2008): 115-39, p. 116.

himself a chantry singer; by the end of the text, Will sings the liturgy along with the figures of his dream.³¹⁸ Will goes from being an enamored auditor to an attentive participant in the musical productions of Holi Churche.

But what about mysticism? This dissertation is, after all, about mystical song, and contemporary criticism is fairly quiet about *Piers Plowman*'s connection to medieval mysticism.³¹⁹ When contemporary critics have found anything of the mystical in *Piers Plowman*, it is in its process of reading, reflection, and revision. Barbara Newman, for instance, remarks that Langland, like Julian of Norwich, refuses to separate privileged from ordinary religious experience, always looking back on the entirety of his life as an epiphanic offering. Within this system of reflection, *Piers* uses allegory and typology to collapse temporalities, ensuring lifelong revision of the text and a subsequent denial of formal closure. This is a form of mysticism in practice.³²⁰

³¹⁸ Pearsall, Derek. *Piers Plowman: an Edition of the C-text*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), C.V.1-104.

³¹⁹ The poem has evaded this generic or functional classification even more effectively than the others it touches. Jean Jules Jusserand is both the first and last critic of *Piers Plowman* to write a sustained monograph on the mystical elements in Langland's work. See Jusserand, Jean Jules, *Piers Plowman: a contribution to the history of English mysticism* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1894). More recently, there are shorter but very helpful essays by A.V.C. Schmidt, "Langland and the Mystical Tradition," *The medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Papers Read at the Exeter Symposium, July 1980*. Ed by Marion Glasscoe (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1980), pp. 17-38 as well as Garrison, Jennifer. "Failed Signification: *Corpus Christi* and *Corpus Mysticum* in *Piers Plowman*," *YLS* Vol 23, (2009): 97-123; and Jessica Rosenfeld dedicates one chapter of her *Ethics and Enjoyment in late medieval Poetry: Love After Aristotle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) to the role of divine *fabliau* and allegory, at times *almost* touching on the subject of divine love (see Chapter 4: "Love's knowledge: fabliau, allegory, and fourteenth-century anti-intellectualism," 107-134).

³²⁰ Newman is referring in particular to the relationship between *Piers Plowman* and Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of Divine Love*, though I think that these resonances can be applied to other mystical writers as well. See Newman, Barbara. "Redeeming the

There is a further effect of the involvement of *Piers*' confounding narrative as a type of "mystical" experience. By treating the alliterative, poetic landscape as a "wondre" – like a privileged revelatory experience – Langland creates a text that allows its reader to participate in an extraordinary religious experience usually reserved for the *electi*. Though *Piers*' allegorical forms, in their homeliness, are available to all, they also encourage and require, in their voiced mutability, years of careful, contemplative entrainment to understand: this is a devotional habitus that works both diagetically (on Will, as singer), and extradiagetically (on the reader, and on her books).

More specifically, *Piers Plowman*'s musical-mystical operation seems to take its cues from Rollean *canor*, and Rolle's mysticism in general underpins some of the more important themes of the poem as a whole. This chapter will outline some of the ways in which Richard Rolle's experience of music inflects the ground of *Piers Plowman*'s musical landscape, both in a material sense and in a thematic one. That is, *Piers Plowman*'s moments of song and the text's relationship to the liturgy show a debt to Rolle's practice of *canor* as expressed in his English works. Simultaneously (and conversely), *Piers Plowman* shows a tentative disapprobation of the *joculatores dei* or "Goddess minstrales." Often interpreted as anti-Franciscan sentiment, this negative attitude can also be read as a direct response to Richard Rolle's antisocial, antiliturgical persona as it was understood by late-fourteenth century authors such as Walter Hilton.³²¹

A number of fifteenth-century copies of *Piers Plowman* also include works of Rollean

Time: Langland, Julian, and the Art of Lifelong Revision." *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, Vol 23 (2009), pp. 1-32.

³²¹ A persona primarily expressed in his Latin, rather than in his English, works. For a discussion of the *joculatores dei*, see Clopper, Lawrence. *Songs of Rechelesnesse: Langland and the Franciscans*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

mysticism; each of these manuscripts implicitly instruct a reader on how to understand *Piers Plowman* within the context of Rollean *canor*, and Rollean mysticism within the context of late medieval allegory and allegoresis.

Of the fifty-eight surviving manuscripts that contain *Piers Plowman*, twenty-seven – just under half – are *florilegia*. Four of these compilations include treatises by Rolle. These are *The Form of Living*, *Ego Dormio*, *The Commandment*, and an English translation of the *Emendatio Vitae*.³²² *The Form of Living* is common to all four texts that contain works by Rolle and *Piers Plowman*; the *Ego Dormio*, the *Emendatio Vitae*, and *The Commandment* each appear in one. Outside of the *Prose Psalter*, these are Rolle's most popular English works.³²³ The four manuscripts are: the Vernon manuscript, Bodleian Library MS.Eng.Poet.a.1; New York, Pierpont Morgan Library MS 818; Cambridge, Trinity College MS B.15.17; Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College MS 669. Each one shows a different way of understanding both *Piers Plowman* and Rollean *canor* as mutually-constituted elements. In addition, all four train the reader in

³²² All three texts were popular. *The Form of Living* was immensely so, appearing in full in 49 manuscripts. A fragment survives in one other manuscript, and a partial version was printed twice during the Early Modern period. *Ego Dormio* appears in 11 manuscripts, all of which also contain the *Form*. The *Commandment*, the shortest of all of these texts, occurs in partial or complete form in 19 manuscripts, 8 of which include *The Form of Living* or *Ego Dormio* along with the *Form*; four include a version of the English *Emendatio Vitae*. See Hanna, Ralph. *The English Manuscripts of Richard Rolle: A Descriptive Catalogue*. (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2010), as well as Nicholas Watson, *Richard Rolle and the Invention of Authority*, p. 248.

³²³ English works that do not appear are *Meditations on the Passion*, *The Bee and the Ostrich*, *Desire and Delight*, *Ghostly Gladness*, *The Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, *The Ten Commandments*, Rolle's Lyrics (except for those intercalated in the *Form* and *Ego Dormio*), the English version of the *Incendium Amoris*, *Oleum effusum*, and the *Lessouns of Dirige*. In other words, the texts that do not appear are by and large shorter, less famous pieces.

ways that benefit the reading of *Piers* within the context of communal musical performance.

Three of the treatises – *The Form of Living*, *Ego Dormio*, and *The Commandment* – were written for Rolle’s most famous disciple, Margaret Kirkby, an anchoress who may also have been one of the compilers of the *Officium et Miracula*.³²⁴ These three texts guide the devout in the first steps of the contemplative life, but unlike other guides for anchoresses, they dispense with the formulaic structures of more traditional devotional texts.³²⁵ Instead, they take the form of intimate epistles to a dear friend, addressing the neophyte as if in person.³²⁶ Rolle repeatedly uses the familiar “thou” and includes Margaret’s words as part of the recounted dialogue of the text.³²⁷ When Rolle ends this epistle, his valediction is a loving one. “Lo, Margaret,” he calls her by name, “If hit doth

³²⁴ For more on the *Officium* within the context of *canor* and Rollean hagiography, see Chapter 1. This supposition is based off of an ascription in MS Longleat 29, which contains *Ego Dormio*, *The Form of Living*, *The Commandment*, and a number of Rollean lyrics that addresses the work to Margaret. See McIlroy, Claire Elizabeth. *The Prose Treatises of Richard Rolle*. (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004); Hughes, Jonathan. *Pastors and visionaries: religion and secular life in late medieval Yorkshire* (York: Boydell and Brewer, 1988). About Margaret, much can be said, but little with certainty. See Hughes, Jonathan, “Margaret Kirkby, 1391x4”, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

³²⁵ The anonymous *Ancrene Riwe* (13th century), for instance, devotes its “outer” chapters (1 and 8) to exterior practice and its “inner” chapters (2-7) to contemplation and cogitation. Aelred of Rievaulx’s *Institutione Inclusarum* (12th century), a source-text for *Ancrene Riwe*, has a tripartite division. It deals first with the exterior life, then with the interior, and finally, a set of affective meditations on the life of Christ. See Zettersten, A. *The English text of the Ancrene Riwe, edited from Magdalene College, Cambridge, MS Pepys 2498*. (London: EETS, 1976).

³²⁶ “*Tractatus Ricardi heremite ad Margaretam de Kyrkby, reclusam, de Vita Contemplatiua*,” the *Form of Living* is entitled in one manuscript. MS Longleat 29. Taken from Ogilvie-Thomson, S. J, Ed. *Richard Rolle: Prose and Verse: edited from MS Longleat 29 and related manuscripts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

³²⁷ “Bot now,” he says, May thou ask me and say: “thou spekest so mych of loue; tell me what loue is, and whare hit is...” these bene hard questions to louse to a febel man and a fleisschley as I am.” (Ibid, p. 18).

the good and profite to the, thanke God and pray for me.”³²⁸ Whether the relationship is a fiction or not is unimportant. The point is that the effectiveness of the treatise is dependent on its circulation as an intimate, verbal exchange.

The *Emendatio Vitae* has a slightly different history. Originally a Latin text, it draws not only from Aelred of Rievaulx’s *De institutione inclusarum*, but also from Hugh of Strasbourg’s *Compendium theologiae veritatis*, Raymund of Pennaforte’s *Summa de paenitentia*, and from Rolle’s own commentaries: the Psalms, the *Super canticum canticorum*, and the *Contra amatores* all make an appearance.³²⁹ Although its sources mark it as part of the tradition of *cura pastoralis*, the content is never highly difficult or esoteric, and once translated out of Latin, could just as easily have been appreciated by the lay devout reader as by a parish priest.³³⁰ Obviously, the medieval period thought so: the *Emendatio Vitae* was translated seven different times over the course of the medieval period, and can be found in 16 manuscripts.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ This has led some contemporary scholars to call it derivative. However, this is also what made it an accessible and desirable text for the late medieval reader.

³³⁰ Compare this with the *Incendium Amoris*, which is much more popular today but appears only in Richard Misyn’s 1435 translation, *The Fire of Love*. In the Latin version, there are 108 manuscripts. See his *English Manuscripts of Richard Rolle*. But Hugh Kempster, in *Richard Rolle, Emendatio Vitae: Amendinge of Lyf, A Middle English Translation, Edited from Dublin, Trinity College MS 432* (Doctoral Dissertation, The University of Waikato: 2007), suggests that it had been translated “no less than seven times by the end of the [15th] century.” (ix). More copies of the *Emendatio vitae* (in Latin) from the 14th and 15th centuries than any of Rolle’s other works: there are 108 copies. Only Richard Misyn, a Carmelite Prior at Lincoln, has been identified as a translator. The *Emendatio* was printed in 1510 in Paris along with extracts from the *Ancrene Wisse* and translated into Latin (Allen, *Writings*, p. 210). Latin editions were published in Antwerp in 1533, Cologne in 1535 and 1536, and the last printing, by de la Bigne’s *Magna bibliotheca veterum partum*, was published in 1622, 1654, 1677, and 1694.

The manuscripts that contain Rollean and Langlandian material engage in a self-conscious formal enactment of devotional labor; this is true in terms of their material arrangement as well as the scribal treatment of *Piers* in relationship to the Rollean contents. The similar treatment of Rolle and Langland raises the alliterative poem to the level of mystical practice, each text in its own way. The Vernon manuscript, for instance, suggests a means of reading *Piers Plowman* as a liturgical text, one that gets beyond the written word to the immediacy of orality. The Trinity manuscript presents a heightened understanding of the psychosynthetic work that devotion and allegory do as abstracted forms of self-analysis; it treats *Piers Plowman*'s allegorical figures and the *Form of Living*'s description of mystical ascent with the same sort of rubrication: *Anima* and *Activa Vita* are surrounded by red-ink boxes, as are Rollean terms like *insuperable* or *singular* love. Gonville and Caius does similar training work, both of how to recognize the spirit – *Anima* – and how to recognize it in others, through need – *paupertas* – in the expression of choral *caritas*: in two places in the manuscript, quotations from *Piers Plowman* are used to marginally annotate Rollean material.

Materiality aside, the narrative of *Piers Plowman* appropriates a Rollean understanding of the usefulness of sleep in attaining spiritual wakefulness. For a poem in which the narrator falls asleep nine times, and in which nearly every revelation, discussion, vision, breakthrough or insight, and every aesthetic claim for the *form* of the literary text is bound by sleeping moments, how sleep works is pivotal to understanding the poem; *Piers* keeps its eye on moments of sleep, moments which have been read as

everything from spiritual lethargy to moral laxity.³³¹ When read in a Rollean context – and after seeing Rollean *canor* in a Carthusian one – a different understanding of the devotional uses of sleep emerges. “He that is ordeynour of al thyng,” Rolle says, “suffreth nat that oure sleep be without meed to vs, if we adresse oure lif at his wille.”³³² The will of God is that sleep further the life of the soul rather than hinder it. And, indeed, Rolle’s English works associated with the *Piers Plowman* tradition explore the efficacy and interpretations of dreams and of the dream-state; a reader who had both Rolle and Langland to hand would have been able to mutually interpret moments of Langlandian dreaming in a Rollean context. It is Will’s job throughout *Piers Plowman* to develop sleeping practice of wakefulness, and spiritual wakefulness, in turn, allows the musical

³³¹ This is not necessarily the role that sleep takes in earlier dream allegory. “In terms consistent with medieval psychology, what happens in [dream allegories] goes something like this: reason’s dialogue with the dreamer’s imagination prepares it to receive the truths that can be abstracted from images, truth that at the end of the dream or immediately after waking can finally be deposited in memory. The dreamer’s initial sickness is thus located by the poet in the relationship between imagination and reason. Because they have not properly ordered the first to the second, these literary dreamers suffer from an illness that necessarily renders them incapable of abstracting truth from the images of the dream. Though at the outset of the poem they do not possess the well-ordered soul described by Avicenna as a precondition for the true dream, the kinds of visionary images produced by their fertile imaginations indicate that they are somehow ripe for revelation, a liminal experience, that will lead to moral and psychic wholeness.” See Lynch, Kathryn L. *The High medieval Dream Vision: Poetry, Philosophy, and Literary Form*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988). p. 69. However, by the fourteenth century, this relationship of images to reason and language to ideation had broken down to the point that *Piers Plowman*, as a discombobulation of specularity, makes more sense than not. For sleep in *Piers Plowman* specifically, see Vaughan, Míceál. “‘Til I Gan Awake’: The Conversion of Dreamer into Narrator in *Piers Plowman* B.” *Yearbook of Langland Studies* (1991): 175-92. Vaughan traces the moments of confession from moments of sleep to waking moments, arguing for their illegitimacy or legitimacy, respectively. The role of sleep and moral laxity in medieval society in broader terms is discussed in Coxon, Sebastian. “Time and Space,” in *Laughter and Narrative in the Later Middle Ages: German Comic Tales 1350-1520*. (London: Modern Humanities Research Association and Maney Publishing, 2008), pp. 86-109.

³³² Vernon MS, Fol 334rb. This is from *The Commandment*.

landscape of *Piers Plowman* to operate as *musica celestis* rather than as mundane song or dangerous minstrelsy.

The Use of Sleep: Reading Rolle in *Piers Plowman*

Rolle's *Form of Living* begins with a description of sleep as a positive spiritual quality. The contemplative who has "forsaken the solace and the ioy of this world" and become a solitary hopes, eventually, to "cum to reste and ioye in heuen."³³³ In other words, the contemplative life begins with solitude, and ends in a blissful sleep: the reader's final goal is eternal rest.³³⁴ A similar conceit opens Richard Rolle's *Ego Dormio*.³³⁵ "*Ego dormio et cor meum vigilat*," says Rolle, identifying spiritual alertness with corporeal sleep. "Hold thyn ere and hyre of loue," Rolle says, as he calls his listener to attention, translating the Latin phrase for an English reader: "I slepe and my hert waketh."³³⁶ The treatise depicts an alert soul within a sleeping body, a body whose ears tune to spiritual matters as the contemplative moves away from physical wakefulness.

When Will falls asleep, he is mimicking the *Ego dormio* of Rolle's English works. In the Prologue, the Dreamer appropriates the costume of a hermit, and goes to "reste under a brood bank."³³⁷ Similarly, the initial stop on Will's journey to find Dowel is sleep. The dream that opens Passus VIII is marked by an immediate intrusion, one

³³³ Ogilvie-Thomson, S. J. *Richard Rolle: Prose and Verse: edited from MS Longleat 29 and related manuscripts*. (Oxford: EETS, 1988), p. 5.

³³⁴ Even though, in the meantime, she will suffer bodily and spiritual pains and temptations. Ibid, p. 5. *The Form of Living* begins with a short introduction on the means by which the devil tempts those pursuing a perfect life, namely, by bereaving them of the goods of kind and grace and by actively inflicting corporeal pain.

³³⁵ Song of Songs 5:2. *Ego dormio et cor meum vigilat*.

³³⁶ Ogilvie-Thomson, p. 26.

³³⁷ B.P.7-8.

which forces Will awake: the Pardon of Passus VII has just been torn, a proven failure as both a social contract and a promise of salvation; in other words, he has not yet gained the facility of sleeping in body while being alert at heart. Like the *Form*, this moment of sleep marks a spiritual beginning:

And thus I wente widewher, walking my one,
By a wilde wildernesse and by a wode side;
Blisse of the brides abide me made,
And under lynde upon a launde lened I a stounde
To lythe the layes that the lovely foweles made.
Murthe of hire mouthes made me ther to slepe;
The merveillouseste metels mette me thane
That ever wight dremed in world, as I wene.³³⁸

Will abjures sociality, setting out as a solitary, a spiritual Rollean in a land of dreams.

Moving from the microcosmic civilization of the half-acre into a solitary pastoral timescape, Will drifts to sleep to the sound of music, and, once asleep, engages in an act of introspection in which he meets Thought, a “much man... like to myselve,” who calls him by name.³³⁹ This sleeping moment allows Will to identify a version of himself engaged in thinking, an act of psychic becoming. Though Will is asleep, his mind is awake and working on problems of identity and soteriology.

Rolle links productive spirituality to self-care and the ordering of waking and sleeping hours. He admonishes moderating between a body—which necessitates dormition—and a spirit, which, when properly habituated, requires none. “Wakere thinkynge on God,” says Rolle, is necessary, “so that ther be no tyme bot that thow thinke

³³⁸ B.VIII.62-69

³³⁹ B.VIII.68-71. In the same way that Rolle refers, in the *Form*, to the Margaret Kirkby by *her* “kynde name.” Perhaps B.VIII is an epistle to the self.

on God, outaken slepe that is commune to alle,”³⁴⁰ and elsewhere, “Til slep come on the,” Rolle says,

be euere in preyer or in good meditacion, and ordeyne thi waking, thi preying, and thi fastyng that hit beo don with discrecion, not ouermuchel ne ouer luytel.³⁴¹

The contemplative who practices a proper *media via* – a “good mene” – between restriction and indulgence, is “euer thenkinge on those things that most pleseth god.”³⁴² He appropriates the characteristics of Reson, who his pity on Will and “rokkes [him] aslepe” in Passus XV after he wakes, raving, from the dizzying scholasticism of Passus XII-XIV and the inset dream-within-a-dream of Passus XI.³⁴³ Caring for the body allows for proper care of the soul; being awake too often is dangerous.³⁴⁴

For Rolle, as for *Piers Plowman*, sleep is a common human necessity that requires discipline, just like any sense experience requires proper study (Studie) in order to be properly interpreted. No matter what, the point is to condition the self towards spiritual fitness.³⁴⁵

³⁴⁰ Kempster, Ch. 4, p. 15.

³⁴¹ Vernon MS, Fol 334rb. *The Commandment*.

³⁴² The “mene” is the middle voice of a polyphonic chant, the voice that ties all the other moving parts together.

³⁴³ “Folk helden me a fool; and in that folie I raved, / Til Reson hadde ruthe on me and rokkes me aslepe” (B.XV.10-11). It can be hard to tell where the inset dream, which includes the dialogue with Ymaginatif, ends; Langland appears to have forgotten that his dreamer sleeps without explicitly waking. However, it seems to have ended by the end of Passus B.XIV.

³⁴⁴ Ogilvie-Thomson, p. 4.

³⁴⁵ The *Emendatio Vitae* proposes a cumulative understanding of spiritual good that serves as a heuristic for Langland’s Dowel, Dobet, and Dobest. Dowel, Dobet, and Dobest mean many things in *Piers Plowman*. And this is just it: in Rolle’s formulation, the three things required of a clean heart and a pure life are flexible, determined by necessity and the spiritual progress of the contemplative. See Boitani, Piero. “Dream and

Sleep is a pivotal practice in the spiritual journey; the contemplative does not sin while sleeping as long as her waking hours are free of evil thoughts.³⁴⁶ Still, even the properly fed and rested contemplative will not live a life of perfect ease. “Our enemy wol nat suffer vs,” *The Form of Living* says

to be in reste whan we slep, bot than he is about to begile vs in many maneres: orwhiles with grisful ymages for to make vs ferd, and mak vs loth with our state; otherwhile with faire ymages, faire syghtes and that semen confortable, for to make vs glad in vayne, and make vs wene that we ben better than we ben.³⁴⁷

It isn't that the contemplative isn't responsible for resisting the temptations of his dreams. Rather, the properly disciplined contemplative will have dreams that are themselves helpful for his spiritual work. Unrestful sleep, nightmares, and chimeras are phenomena of spiritual laxity, a sign of vainglory and pride.

In addition to these general statements about the efficacy of dreams, Rolle's *Form* presents readers of *Piers Plowman* with a taxonomy of them. Unlike *Piers Plowman*, which allows dreams to occur without any formal reading of their import, Rolle divides dreams into six types. This is a common division in medieval dream-theory that comes originally from Macrobius' commentary on the *Somnium Scipionis*, but Rolle's version diverges from the traditional one.³⁴⁸ The first two types of dreams occur when the dreamer has had too little or too much food, the third are temptations from the devil, and

Vision.” *English medieval Narrative in the 13th and 14th centuries*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 71-113.

³⁴⁶ Ogilvie-Thomson, p. 8.

³⁴⁷ Ogilvie-Thomson, p. 8.

³⁴⁸ Macrobius lists only five types of dream: the *somnium* (an interpretable dream), the *visio* (a vision that comes true), an *oracluum* (a prophetic dream), an *insomnium* (a dream caused by bodily disturbance, usually false), and a *visum* (a nightmare). See Kruger, Steven F. *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

the fourth include dreams obviously related to nighttime thoughts. The two final types of dreams are most important for Rolle, and by extension, his reader (and for readers of Langland's Will):

The fyfte [type of dream comes] throug reuelacioun of the Holy Goste,
that is done in many maneres. The vj is of thoghtes before that falleth to
Criste or holy chirche, reuelacioun comynge aftre.³⁴⁹

Let us take Rolle's dream theory at face value. If a properly fed and rested contemplative is capable of discernment of spirits and falls asleep thinking of God, all of her dreams have the potential for spiritual benefit.

Dreams, then, are about wakeful preparation more than about sleep itself: they are about the process of discernment which occurs prior to and after sleep: the process of preparing for, and then providing a critical reading of, dreams. According to this Rollean model, Langland's dreams are not only moments of rupture from generic formalism; they also play out a complex dialectic at work in *Piers Plowman* as a Macrobian dream-theory that subverts the very *a priori* of the claims that a dream can make: Will's many dreams, as fragmented or disturbing as they might be, remain of benefit to the properly prepared contemplative reader (a reader who is sometimes Will, too).

Take for instance, the final eschatological scene of *Piers Plowman*, when the lascivious Franciscan, *Sire Penetrans-domos*, enters into the Barn of Unitee, the invisible church of Christian souls. Will is a guest here, observing everything, as the friar attempts to infiltrate the gathered group of Pees, Hende-Speche, Contrition, and Conscience. Contrition, wallowing in despair over his manifold sins, forgets "to crye and to wepe and wake for his wikked werkes as he was wont do doone," and then falls into a spiritual

³⁴⁹ Ogilvie-Thomson, p. 8.

sleep – he “lith adreynt and dremeth.”³⁵⁰ In a wasteland strewn with wounded, maimed, and swooning figures – at the end of the world – only Conscience is still awake. “By Crist!” he says, “I wole bicom a pilgrym... to seken Piers the Plowman!”³⁵¹ When Conscience moves out of the dream to look for Piers, Will wakes. *Piers Plowman* ends. Here, sleep indicates a lack of spiritual fervor, a death of the soul, something so dangerous that it threatens to end the narrative of *Piers Plowman* entirely. Although sleep may be efficacious, it is deadly here because the collected wits of the soul have not properly prepared themselves to sleep wakefully.

If one imagines the world of *Piers Plowman* in the Rollean terms of *Ego Dormio*, *The Form of Living*, *The Commandment*, and the *Emendatio Vitae*, the dreamer is most awake when he drifts off to sleep, so long as he has done his contemplative reading-cum-homework. It is here that he has the greatest access to mystical truth.³⁵² Will’s meeting with Thought, with Conscience, with *Anima* – all are meetings with himself – is a Rollean integration of self with self in the space of the ego, of the “*Ego dormio*.”³⁵³ In addition to this, the very specific dream theory that Rolle presents in *The Form of Living* provides the reader of *Piers Plowman* with a devotional rubric for tackling the difficult ethics of dream-allegory.

³⁵⁰ B.XX.370-1, 378.

³⁵¹ B.XX.381, 383.

³⁵² Despite the suspicion that dream-interpretation books had throughout the medieval period: books that belonged to Reading Abbey and Bury St Edmunds contain books for interpreting dreams, and a 14th-century English manuscript includes religious tracts, prayers, and hymns along with the *Somniale Danielis*. See Kruger, Steven F. *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 15.

³⁵³ *Canticum Canticorum* 5:2.

Langland's critical *canor*: angelic *Glorias* and sung *Caritas*

In B.XIX, Conscience meditates on the name of Jesus, asking the reader to do so as well:³⁵⁴

Ac to carpe moore of Crist, and how he com to that name,
Faithly for to speke, his firste name was Jesus...
Aungeles out of heven come knelynge and songe,
*Gloria in excelsis Deo!*³⁵⁵

Meditation on the Holy Name leads the commune to cry out in an angelic song, the *Gloria*, and to recall this moment of angelic presence as part of their performance of membership in the mystical church.³⁵⁶

Central to Conscience's call is one of the fourteenth century's most important affective modes of performance: devotion to and repetition of the Holy Name of Jesus. This is a type of devotion of which Rolle was a proponent. For instance, when the mystic comes to the heights of spiritual awareness, he cries out "'*Ihesu!*'" says Rolle, "nat bodily with the mouth, for that songe hath both good and il," but, rather, his "thoghtes [will turn] to melodi" and "ioyeful songe." The name of Jesus will be *canor* when the contemplative reaches the singular level of love where she is "menged with Ihesu, whos mynde is as a melodie of musike in a fest of wyne."³⁵⁷ This is like the narrator above, who encounters the Jesus in *Piers* B.XIX and engages in the *Gloria*, the song of the angels.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁴ This may very well be a nod to the Cults of the Holy Name, which have been discussed in passing in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

³⁵⁵ B.XIX.69-70, 74-74a, quoting, in part, Luke 2:14.

³⁵⁶ B.XIX.213.

³⁵⁷ Kempster, Ch. 11, p. 38

³⁵⁸ Ogilvie-Thomson, p. 31

Both *Piers Plowman* and Rolle iterate the power of this angelic *Gloria* throughout their texts, for, when the contemplative comes to the hierophanaic realm of angels, he sings an extended meditation on the *Gloria*:

And say thus in thi herte: “*Praised be thou, Kyng, and thanked be thou, Kyng, and blessed be thou, Kyng. Ihesu, al my ioyng, of al thi yiftes good, that for me spilet thi blood, and deyed on the rood, thou gif me grace to synge the songe of thi praisynge.*” And thynke hit nat only whils thou etest, bot bothe bifore and after, euer bot when thou praigest or spekest.³⁵⁹

This is what Conscience’s call in B.XIX would look like if it were cast, not as alliterative poetry, but as mystical pedagogy.

Not only does this Rollean passage evoke Conscience’s call to sing the *Gloria* in B.XIX, but its reference to continual praise, particularly during mealtime, also outlines a devotional admixture of quotidian tasks with heavenly ones, an impulse we have seen in the Carthusian form of Rollean *canor* in chapter two. Even Will, the chantry priest, *Activa Vita*, the minstrel, or Haukyn, with his torn cloak and worldly cares, might be able to perform both this angelic *Gloria* and go about the act of living within Christian society.³⁶⁰ *Musica celestis* is part of the habit of the contemplative reader, whoever that reader might be. “Whan thou spekest to hym,” Rolle says, and

seist ‘Ihesu’ throgh custume, hit shal be in thyn ere ioy, in thi mouth hony, and in thyn hert melody, for the shal thynke ioy to hyre that name be nempned, swetnesse to spek hit, myrth and songe to thynk hit.³⁶¹

³⁵⁹ Ogilvie-Thomson, p. 15-16. Rolle is essentially quoting the *Gloria*.

³⁶⁰ B.XIII.225. It also gestures to the entirety of Passus XIII, wherein Will feasts with Conscience, Clergie, and a learned friar. The idea of mystical song inhering in the feast is one that has already been discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

³⁶¹ Ogilvie-Thomson, p. 18.

The customary practice means that each invocation of Jesus' name is maximally effective; all the time that the mystic spends with this mantra is well-spent, a practice that engages the whole body. It prevents, as Wit's warns against in passus B.IX, the wasting of time that normal, mundane singers might accidentally encourage:

Tynyng of tyme, Truthe woot the sothe,
Is moost yhated upon erthe of hem that ben in hevene;
And siththe to spille speche, that spire is of grace,
And Goddes gleman and a game of hevene.³⁶²

The true contemplative never wastes time or spills words; she is a gleman – a minstrel – of God, singing Jesus' name through menial tasks. Like Charity, who is “patient of tongue,” true lovers of God spill out into the social register of communal song.³⁶³

So then, this is one similarity of content: a dedication to the name of Jesus that manifests as liturgical, communal or charitable action. It is no accident that angelic song and Charity appear in such close proximity to each other. Charity is that figure who links one Christian to another in a bond of intersubjectival awareness. The same *caritas* also presents the communal intent that allows for choral and cooperate song. This suggests another point of contact between Rollean *canor* and *Piers Plowman*'s investment in musical ethics: charity is, in a text that often views music with suspicion, a type of mystical song.

When Will first acknowledges himself by name in the poem, he refers to himself as one in search of *caritas*:

I have lyved in londe,” quod I, “my name is Longe Will –
And fond I never ful charite, bfore ne bihynde.”³⁶⁴

³⁶² B.IX.99-102.

³⁶³ B.XIV.99

³⁶⁴ B.XV.148-153.

Though Will initially sets out to hear “wondres,” his desire narrows into a search for Charity as soon as his ego develops enough to formulate a name for himself. However, unlike so many of the other figures Will meets in the poem, here, he will be disappointed. Charity *qua* Charity never appears: Will only *hears* about her from afar, or glimpses a type of *caritas* in the form of the Good Samaritan in B.XIX and the Tree of Charity in B.XVI. In other words, Charity is a disembodied voice, gaining corporeal form through allegory, and more importantly, through the resonance of the narrator as soon as he becomes Will – *intentio*.

Charity is Dobest, as Rolle himself admonishes, “hold thou in hert and in werke, and thou hast al done that we may say or write. For fulnes of the lawe is charite; in that hongeth al.”³⁶⁵ Charity emerges in Rolle as the means by which the reader is capable of attaining the fullness of God’s demands, of overcoming *Studie* for the sake of true knowledge, and of inscribing the name *Ihesu* on the heart in the place of the self, or of legalism. Charity is the lynchpin around which intersubjectivity and angelic song turn.³⁶⁶ As Rolle says:

Bot now may thou ask me and say: ‘Thou spekest so mych of loue; tel me what loue is, and whare hit is, and how I shal loue God verrayly, and how I may knowe that I loue hym, and in what state I may most loue hym.’
These bene hard questions to louse to a febel man and a fleissshely.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁵ Ogilvie-Thomson, p. 18. See also Matthew 22:37-40: *Diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo, et in tota anima tua, et in tota mente tua. Hoc est maximum, et primum mandatum. Secundum autem simile est huic: Diliges proximum tuum, sicut teipsum. In his duobus mandatis universa lex pendet, et prophetæ.*

³⁶⁶ As early as Augustine, church fathers noted the role *caritas* played the motion of the soul towards God and the love of one’s fellow man for his sake.

³⁶⁷ Ogilvie-Thomson, p. 18.

These questions, like others throughout this inquiry, look a lot like the questions Will asks in *Piers* of the allegorical figures he quizzes. Rolle himself answers *in persona* for the figures that, in *Piers*, are constituted by Conscience and for Charity. And Charity, marked by generosity and liberality, is both surrounded by and filled with music. For instance, after repenting for his sins, he washes himself and

“syngeth [as] he doth so, and som tyme seith wepynge,
Cor contritum et humiliatum, Deus, non despicias.”³⁶⁸

Directly after hearing about Charity’s performative humility – sometimes spoken, although more often sung – Will declares his love of Charity, saying he “wolde that” he “knewe hym[.] no creature levere!”³⁶⁹ Anima later depicts Charity as one who “synge[s] and rede[s],” as a priest, Charity properly performs his duties.³⁷⁰ The figure of Charity not only restores the use of song as a Christian good in *Piers*, but also reinvigorates the fallen status of priesthood that accompanied Trajan’s “overskipperis.” Through the proper priesthood of Charity, the Christian community finds the appropriate relationship between song and salvation.

Unfortunately, this realm of communal relation is no more than an ideal state. Charity never actually appears, but is always only alluded to through metaphorical characteristics; the song of Charity is encapsulated in the images *of* him created by Anima, Haukyn, and Piers the Plowman.³⁷¹ In order to find passages of enacted, sung charity in the text – songs that, through performance, bind and form the actual Christian community of the dreamworld and Will’s waking state – we must look to Passus XVIII,

³⁶⁸ B.XV.193-4.

³⁶⁹ B.XV.195.

³⁷⁰ B.XV.225 and gloss.

³⁷¹ This includes the tree of Charity described by Anima in B.XVI.

to the scenes of resurrection and the harrowing of Hell. Here, Will's dream communicates between the memorial images of the salvation narrative and the sung communities that it creates: "Of gerlis and of *Gloria, laus* gretly me dremed," he says,

And how *osanna* by orgen olde folk songen,
And of Cristes passion and penaunce, the peple that ofraughte.³⁷²

What is depicted here is the entire range of humanity employed in the heavenly song of the mass, children singing a *gloria* – returning back to the liturgical song of angels – and the old singing *osanna* in organum. Song gathers the community of believers.³⁷³ Here, too, music demonstrates its ahistorical and polyphonic functions, as multiple histories, peoples, and voices sing at once; the "Old Jewes of Jerusalem" sing "*Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini*" in a liturgical revisioning of Christ's entry into Jerusalem.³⁷⁴ These figures give up their categorical identities for the sake of liturgical performance, which in turn becomes a performance of a community of charity.³⁷⁵

Mysticism, music, and allegory are about the function of form on the body, and about the corporeal habituation a practicing community achieves through customary activity in the charitable understanding of the Other. In the reading or production of allegory, the one engaging with the text collapses the gap between body and soul,

³⁷² B.XVIII.7-9, and above, p. 6.

³⁷³ This is calling on a long tradition in Christian theology, stemming from Paul's epistle to the Corinthians, in which all actions not laden with Charity are compared to nugatory song: "*Si linguis hominum loquar et angelorum caritatem autem non habeam factus sum velut aes sonans aut cymbalum tinniens et si habuero prophetiam et noverim mysteria omnia et omnem scientiam et habuero omnem fidem ita ut montes transferam caritatem autem non habuero nihil sum et si distribuero in cibos pauperum omnes facultates meas et si tradidero corpus meum ut ardeam caritatem autem non habuero nihil mihi prodest.*" (Corinthians 13:1-3)

³⁷⁴ B.XVIII.17-17a.

³⁷⁵ More on this in Chapter Four.

between self and text, and between self and literary other in a theorizing of subjecthood that is as habitual as it is intentional.³⁷⁶ This self-theorizing helps define how, exactly, mysticism, music, and allegory might work together in a devotional project. All three are systems in which the self is lost in a deep affective drive to return to the *commune*, the “fair feeld ful of folk” that limns Will’s charitable desire for a better world.³⁷⁷ A Rollean reading of *Piers Plowman* finds angelic song in the very act of searching for Charity, of directing one’s attention to its absence, as Will, and the reader, do.

Haukyn’s Rolle and Liturgical Song: personas in *Piers Plowman*

Piers Plowman seems to align itself with Rollean *canor*, paralleling, if not borrowing, his understanding of the musical means by which the reader comes in touch with heavenly experience, whether it be through sleep, through charity, or through singing itself. However, the same approbation it has for Rollean-style *musica celestis* is not necessarily granted to the figures in *Piers Plowman* who look, and act, like Rolle himself. In his essay on the autobiographical passus of C.V.1-104, Ralph Hanna notes a

³⁷⁶ Raskolnikov, Masha. *Body Against Soul: Gender and Sowlehele in Middle English Allegory*. (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2009), p. 5.

³⁷⁷ B.P.17. Compare this with Anna Gibbs’ understanding of synchrony, when “an attentive listener’s or an audience’s almost invisible movements are synchronized with the speech rhythms of the person to whom they are listening” in a moment of entrainment and mimesis. Where the *corpus mysticum* leaves off and affective communality begins is a project for a broader synchronic historiographical reading of intersubjective performance. See Gibbs, Anna, “After Affect: Sympathy, Synchrony, and Mimetic Communication” in *The Affect Theory Reader*, Melissa Gregg and Gregory J Seigworth, Eds. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

number of similarities between *Piers Plowman*'s Dreamer and Rolle.³⁷⁸ Both are men who will pray for pay – Will for the citizens of London, Rolle for the Daltons of Pickering and women, like Margaret Kirkby – both operate at the boundaries of religious life, in the liminal space beyond strict clerical orders; these correlating characteristics are not necessarily good ones. Furthermore, mendicancy and institutionalized begging, economies of prayer, and liminal singers all look like pseudo-Rolles, and are rarely portrayed in a positive light.

The description of Haukyn in B.XIII has a particularly striking similarity to Rolle, as Haukyn mimics the grandstanding performances that earned Rolle the reputation of a bloviator. Haukyn is “so singuler by hymself as to sighte of the peple” that he believes there are “noon swich as hymself, ne noon so pope holy.”³⁷⁹ More than this, he is “yhabited as an heremyte, an ordre by hymselfe,” just as Rolle fashioned himself a cloak out of two of his sister’s tunics when he left the university to pursue the life of a solitary; Haukyn’s cloak will later become so tattered by sin that Conscience swears at him for wearing it.³⁸⁰ Haukyn takes “religion saunz rule” and becomes a “liere in soule;” this is exactly what Hilton and the *Cloud of Unknowing* blamed Rolle of being: a liar and false prophet who knowingly led the credulous into improper belief.³⁸¹ But, most importantly

³⁷⁸ Hanna, Ralph III. “Will’s Work.” *Written Work: Langland, Labor, and Authorship*. Steven Justice and Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, editors. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), pp. 23-66.

³⁷⁹ B.XIII.283-4.

³⁸⁰ B.XIII.285. “By Crist! thi beste cote, Huakyn, Hath manye moles and spottes – it moste ben ywasshe!’ [...] It was fouler bi fele fold than it first semed. / It was bidropped with wrahte and wikkede wille, / With envye and yvel speche entisyng to fighte, / Lying and lakkyng and leve tonge to chide; / All that he wiste wikked by any wight, tellen it, / And blame men bihynde hir bak and bidden hem meschaunce.” (B.XIII.314-5; 320-5).

³⁸¹ B.XIII.286, 288.

of all, Haukyn is “sotil of song other sleyest of hondes” – a singer.³⁸² Not only that, he is a “subtle” one, who uses trickery to fool unwitting dupes into following a dangerous religious practice, just as Rolle was accused of doing.

This characterization of Haukyn brings to mind Rolle’s own defensive description of himself in the *Melos Amoris* and *Incendium Amoris*, where he discusses the suspicion in which he was held by churchmen. This was, according to him, in large part because he refused to take part in the liturgical activities of his parish. When Rolle describes his experience of angelic song, it is discordant with earthly music, preventing him from partaking in liturgical practice. For instance, when Rolle first receives his gift of music while in a chapel, he beholds the noise of singers above him:

Forsoth my thoyt continuly to myrth of songe was chaungyd, end als wer loueynge I had thinkand, and in prayers and salmys sayand the same sounde I scheuyd, and so forth to synge that before I sayd for plenty of inward swetnes I bryst oute, forsoth priuely, for allonly before my makar.³⁸³

There are similarities between Rolle’s musical experience and the end of of Passus B.XVIII and beginning of B.XIX, which occur in the movement towards, or within, an ecclesiastical space, but here the similarities end.³⁸⁴ For, while *Piers Plowman*’s musical

³⁸² B.XIII.298.

³⁸³ See Rolle, Richard. *The Fire of Love and the Mending of Life or the Rule of Living*. Harvey, Ralph, Ed. (London: EETS, 1896), p. 36. *Nam cogitacio mea continuo in carmen canorum commutabatur, et quasi odas habui meditando, et eciam oracionibus ipsis et psalmodia eundem sonum edidi. Deinceps usque ad canendum que prius dixeram, pre affluencia suauitatis interne prorupi, occulte quidem, quia tantummodo coram Conditore meo* (Deansely, p. 189).

³⁸⁴ Or, consider the C-text, when Conscience tells will to go to Church:
And to the kyrke y gan go god to honoure;
Before the cross on my knees knocked y my brest
Syhyng for my synnes, seggyng my paternoster,
Wepyng and waylyng til y was aslepe.

song opens up the experience of liturgy into a type of mystical performance, Rolle's experience forecloses liturgical participation. And, in one of the many passages devoted to song in his *Incendium Amoris*, Rolle explains that he has dealt with negativity for this very idea. Because those who are employed "in the kyrk of god ar syngars, ordand in thare degres, set to loue god, and the pepul to stir to deuocion," he says, some of them have

comyn to me askand qey I wald not synge als odyr men qwhen thai hafe oft-tymes sene me in solempne messis. Thai wend forsoth I had done wrange, for ilk man thai say is bun to synge bodily befor his makar and musyk 3eeld of his vtward voys. Therfor I answerd not, for how to my makar I gaff melody and sweytt voys thai knew not.³⁸⁵

Rolle claims an exceptionalism for his own experience of *canor*. It is one that cannot be shared, that mutes the performance of the liturgy, and excuses the contemplative from the obligations of choral song. Compare this to *Piers B.*XVIII, where the liturgy of Palm Sunday is replayed in Will's dream. The processional hymn, Palm Sunday antiphon, and the *Benedictus* of the Mass are all intoned over the course of B.XVIII, and Will's

Thenne mette me muche more than y byfore tolde

Of the matre that me mette furste on Maluerne hulles" (C.V.105-110).

³⁸⁵ Rolle, Richard. *The Fire of Love and the Mending of Life or the Rule of Living*, Tr. Richard Misyn. (London: EETS, 1896). p. 68-9. Margaret Deansely's Latin edition gives the chapter heading as "*Quare perfecte contemplatiui cantibus exterioribus non attendunt; et de errore reprehendencium eos, et de modo proficiendi in contemplacione.*" The Latin version runs thusly: *Quoniam autem in ecclesia cantores et cantatrices ordinantur in gradibus suis constituti ad laudandum Deum, et ad prouocandum populum ad deuocionem : mihi quidem occurrerunt aliqui interrogantes cur sicut ceteri nollem hoc agere, cum sepe me cernerent missarum solempniis interesse. Arbitrantur enim in hoc me errasse, asserentes omnes debere modulari corporaliter coram Conditorem, et musicam exterioris uocis personare. Quamobrem conticui quia qualiter melos ad mediatorem emisi, et dulces edidi modules, omnino ignorabant* (Deansley, Margaret, Ed. *Incendium Amoris of Richard Rolle of Hampole*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1915), p. 232.

response is that of someone attentive to the calls of liturgy, ready to perform musically along with his fellow Christians:

-- and right with that I wakede,
And callede Kytte my wif and Calote my doghter:
'Ariseth and go reverenceth Goddes resurexion,
And crepeth to the cros on knees, and kisseth it for a jewel!'³⁸⁶

He is so attentive, in fact, that he tells us his reaction twice, waking up to go to mass again at the beginning of B.XIX:

Thus I awaked and wroot what I hadde ydremed,
And dighte me derely, and dide me to chirche,
To here holly the masse and to be housled after.³⁸⁷

Whether you read these two awakenings as authorial error or *Piers Plowman* shifting its narrative landscape with every passing passus, *Piers* clearly presents a Dreamer who is concerned with listening, and responding to, liturgical song.

Rolle, for his part, reacts to this sort of participation with predictable scorn:

Sweit gostly songe truly and ful speciall it is giffyn, with vtward songe
acordis not the qwhik in kyrkis and elsqer ar vsyed. It discordis mikyll.³⁸⁸

How can a contemplative possibly be capable of turning inward to the experience of *canor* within the noisy, resonant space of the church? Rolle views the mystical ascent of *musica celestis* as a connection directly to heaven, where earthly music is overwhelmed by contemplation so that he “felys[...] no thing bot heuenly solace” in the moment of the

³⁸⁶ B.XVIII.427-30.

³⁸⁷ B.XIX.1-3.

³⁸⁸ See Rolle, Richard. *The Fire of Love and the Mending of Life or the Rule of Living*. Harvey, Ralph, Ed. (London: EETS, 1896), p. 73. *Dulce canticum spirituale quidem et speciale l ualde, quia specialissimis datum est ; cum exterioribus canticis non concordat, que in ecclesiis uel alibi frequentatur. Dissonat autem multum.* (Deansely, p. 239)

“hegh lufe of god.”³⁸⁹ C.V’s narrator reacts against this, when he reminds Conscience that

Hit bycometh for clerkes Crist for to serue,
God and good men, as here degre asketh:
Somme to synge masses or sitten and wryten,
Redon and resceyuen that resoun ouhte to spene.³⁹⁰

The operation of song in *Piers Plowman* is conscientious, and conscious of others: music is a good that can be given, received, read, or written, tying one Christian to his fellow believer in a web of complicated – and yet necessary – relations of exchange.³⁹¹ When Conscience speaks to Will on Pentecost, it is the first time our narrator admits to a choral subjectivity, the first time he sings with others:

“Knele now,” quod Conscience, “and if thow kanst synge,
Welcome hym and worshiþe hym with *Veni Creator Spiritus!*”
Thanne song I that song, and so dide manye hundred,
And cride with Conscience, “Help us, God of grace!”³⁹²

This sort of song goes beyond the singular body, and forms the *corpus christianorum*, the body of believers who, in this performance of Pentecost, represent the Church Triumphant, the Trinitarian church Beyond Time. This is the first, and only time that Will joins in with the voices of other believers, rather than either performing mercantile solitary Offices, or mutely watching as the liturgy is sung in front of him. In *Piers*

³⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 10. *Nimirum ualde uidetur quod mortalis homo in tam diuina dileccione capitur, quod in sua secreciori substancia non sentit nisi solacium supernum, et quasi in organo ascendit in altum concupitum clarificantem contemplari* (Deansely, p. 32).

³⁹⁰ C.V.62-4.

³⁹¹ Note also the similarity with Rolle, *The Fire of Love and the Mending of Life or the Rule of Living*. Harvey, Ralph, Ed. (London: EETS, 1896), 75. II.4: “Here-to therfore he is takyn vp in priuyte abown odry, for in his mynde melody bidys and sweit plente of heit taris, so that not allone in hym-self he offyr A marghyt offerynge and to criste loueyng in gostly musyk he suld pay, bot also, that he stir odry to lufe, that thai hy thame-self deuoutly and parfytely to god to gyf.”

³⁹² B.XIX.210-213.

Plowman, it is *through* liturgical chant and within the confines of the spiritual wakefulness of dreamscapes that Rollean *canor* finds its home. The angelic song in *Piers Plowman* has liturgical origins: the first from the Matins Ascension Hymn, *Culpat caro, purgat caro, regnat Deus Dei caro* (B.XVIII.408-9) the *Gloria in excelsis Deo* of the Mass (B.XIX.73-74a), and, finally, the Easter Antiphon *Christus resurgens* (B.XIX.149-52), which literally restores Christ back *into* his body.

For Rolle, on the other hand, *canor* is a remarkably personal, even solipsistic experience. It is so personal that when he tries to describe its sound, he fails. “The uoys of this trew lufar,” he says, “slike songe als is of aungell.” Though it is not “se greet or parfyte for freylte of flesch that 3itt cumbyrs the soule[...] Both ar of o kynde here and in hevyn.”³⁹³ In other words, Rollean *canor* is identical to the song of heaven in essence; but less perfect in practice, like a radio signal distorted by an intervening mountain. Rolle recognizes these angelic singers, and even sings with them, but he cannot share the full experience with anyone else: “In Ihesu syngand ful fare fro vtward melody I ha flowne,” he reiteartes. Think, again, of Haukyn, who, mistakes poverty for a virtue, and practices self-involvement instead of charity, living all his life in “langour and defaute.”³⁹⁴

The Ambivalence of Allegory

³⁹³ Rolle, Richard. *The Fire of Love and the Mending of Life or the Rule of Living*, Tr. Richard Misyn. (London: EETS, 1896), p. 72. *Qualis angelorum, talis est iscius concentus, etsi non tantus, nec tam perspicuus, propter carnem corruptibilem que adhuc aggrauat amantem : qui hoc experitur eciam angelica cantica expertus est cum eiusdem speciei : in uia est, et in patria* (Deansely, p. 237).

³⁹⁴ B.XIV.116.

Piers Plowman engages with Rollean *canor* multivalently. In other words, *Piers Plowman* appropriates the song of Rolle's vernacular *visio* while negatively critiquing his Latin *vita*.

First, it asserts that *canor*, as expressed in Rolle's English works, can become a means of understanding the Christian subject (who sings) and his place in the Christian commune (with whom he sings). The content of Rolle's English works – *The Form of Living*, *Ego Dormio*, *The Commandment*, and the *Emendatio Vitae* – provides devotional music in *Piers Plowman* with a power to perform *caritas*, and to sing the Christian community into existence. This music, beyond specific bodies, is a form of *musica celestis* that exists in the mind of the reader, who constitutes mystical song anew with each new reading of the text at hand, and, indeed, with each new dream.

At the same time, *Piers Plowman* takes issue with Rolle as a figure in the landscape of medieval mysticism. The *Incendium Amoris* and *Melos Amoris* disavow communal religious experience, which is something that the structure and content of *Piers* staunchly defends. Because, for *Piers Plowman*, liturgical expression is the form through which *musica celestis* has its greatest embodiment, and through which it most fully employs the performative communal memory of liturgy to move beyond the singular body, its reading of Rolle's *persona* is generally negative. While it is Rolle who breaks into song in the *Form of Living*, it is Conscience, the interior voice, who sets forth in *Piers*. Angelic song employs an interior voice beyond corporeal and material sound, one that somehow undergoes interference with it, one that cannot be used in liturgical exchange. Rolle rejects liturgical song as antithetical to sonorous mystical experience, whereas in *Piers*, the flesh is conquered in a token moment of liturgy: on Easter Sunday,

“hundreds of aungeles harpeden and songen, *Culpat caro, purgat caro, regnat Deus Dei caro.*” Langland celebrates a release from the flesh, but this is imagined in liturgical terms.³⁹⁵

³⁹⁵ B.XVIII.408-9.

CHAPTER FOUR

Liturgical Appropriations, Part 3: Syon Abbey, Performing Bodies, and English

Canor

Syon Abbey, a double monastery founded by Henry V in 1415, was one of the wealthiest and most prominent religious establishments in England by the time of its suppression by Henry VIII on November 25, 1539.³⁹⁶ The Abbey's proximity to London, its royal origins, the steady influx of women from some of England's finest families, and its reputation for strict adherence to the Bridgettine rule, along with its twice-yearly pardons – offered on Laetare Sunday and on Lammas Day – meant that Syon Abbey soon rivaled Canterbury as a destination for English pilgrims. Margery Kempe's visit to Syon on Lammas day in 1434 is probably the most famous appearance of Syon in Middle English literature:

³⁹⁶ Syon was never dissolved. Rather, the community of sisters emigrated, living in various locations on the Continent before settling in Lisbon, Portugal in May 1594. Syon had a history of moving. The first charter of foundation of Sheen Priory, dated to September 25, 1414, has the house situated in Twickenham, but by 1431 their quarters were deemed too small, and the entire convent was moved to a larger building a mile and a half away, in Isleworth. See Cloake, John. *Richmond's Great Monastery*. (London: Richmond Local History Society, 1990), pp.7-8. The literature on Syon is immense, but for a very recent discussion of the intersectionality between literary and historical reactions to Syon see Hutchison, Ann M. "Syon Abbey Preserved: Some Historians of Syon," in *Syon Abbey and its books: reading, writing and religion, c.1400-1700*. E. A. Jones and Alexandra Walsham, Eds. (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010), pp. 228-51. She notes that Charles Wriothesley's *Chronicle of England During the Reigns of the Tudors, from A.D. 1485-1559* calls Syon a "vertues howse of religion" whereas other houses – Bury St Edmunds and Barking Abbey, for instance – are mentioned without praise. See Bennett, Michael. "John Audelay: Some New Evidence on His Life and Work," *The Chaucer Review*, 16 (1982) : 344-55. The *de vincula* Pardon was a special privilege given to Syon by the Pope. Syon was never dissolved. Rather, the community of sisters emigrated, living in various locations on the Continent before settling in Lisbon, Portugal in May 1594.

Fro London sche went to Schene, a iii days beforn Lammes Day, for to purchasyn hir pardon thorw the mercy of owr Lord. And whan sche was in the chirch at Schene, sche had gret devocyon and ful hy contemplacyon. Sche had plentivows teerys of compunceyon and of compassyon.³⁹⁷

Margery's tears and performative devotional posture so inspired a young spectator that he proposed, "be the grace of God to takyn the abite of this holy religyon."³⁹⁸

John Audelay, the blind, deaf, and aged Augustinian monk of Haughmond, commemorated Syon Abbey in his only known collection of lyrics around 1426.³⁹⁹

Today *The Council of Conscience or the Scale of Heaven* is virtually unknown – one of those forgotten literary attempts in a century noted for its dullness – but at least one lyric in the book is of literary historical importance. Poem twenty-three, *The Salutation to the Virgin, Saint Bridget*, interweaves praise of Saint Bridget of Sweden (d. 1373) with the life and religious practice of the English nation.⁴⁰⁰

Audelay's opening lines greet her as a paragon of female virtue: "Hayle! Maydyn and wyfe, hayle! Wedow brygytt!" he cries.⁴⁰¹ From this vantage point, the reader would be excused for thinking that the *Salutation* was just another of the many devotional encomia in the *Council of Conscience*, but Audelay quickly moves away from the hagiographical mode. "Sothly, seuen myle fro Lundun," Audelay says, the "gracious

³⁹⁷ Windeatt, Barry. Ed. *The Book of Margery Kempe*. (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004), pp. 418-9.

³⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 419.

³⁹⁹ The unique manuscript is Bodleian, MS Douce 302. The collection called in variously the *Concilium Conciencie* and the *Scala Celi*. See Whiting, Ella Keats, Ed. *The poems of John Audelay, edited with introduction, notes, and glossary* (Oxford: EETS, 1931), p. xiv.

⁴⁰⁰ This is titled in the manuscript by a longer, Latin name: "*Salutacio Sancte Brigitte virginis et quomodo Dominus Ihesus Christus apparuit illi corporaliter et dedit illi suam benedictionem quod Awdelay*" (Bodleian, MS Douce 302).

⁴⁰¹ Audelay, Poem 23, ll 1-2.

Kyng Herre the Vth founded a monastery.⁴⁰² Essentially next door to the capital city,
Henry V

let priuelege that hole place and callid hit Bregitsion;
The pope conferme ther-to his bul thro3 his special grace,
In the worchip of Saint Bregit,
To al here pilgrims an Lammes-day,
And also mydlentyn Sunday,
This pardon to last fore 3euer and ay;
God graunt vs part of hit.⁴⁰³

From within the world of the religious lyric, Audelay fashions a poem concerned with the emplacement and temporality of liturgical time and of pardoning.

Audelay goes on to entreat all English pilgrims who “visityn thi place in good manere” to pray for their King as well as to Saint Bridget; for the two are united at the walls of Syon, which is in turn connected to the Pope and from the Pope to God.⁴⁰⁴

Bregitsion will give “al Ynglond [...] remission” of its sins.⁴⁰⁵ John Audelay’s Syon was a space in which public, lay piety interacted through windowed cloister walls. It was one in which the devout secular and the enclosed nun or monk communicated, if not directly, at least in a mutually-constitutive performance. The liturgy of the monks and nuns of

⁴⁰² Ibid, ll 136-7.

⁴⁰³ Ibid, ll 138-144.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid, l. 106.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid, l. 153. The pardons were offered on Laetare Sunday and Lammas Day. In addition, the *de vincula* Pardon was a special privilege given to Syon by the Pope. See Bennett, Michael. “John Audelay: Some New Evidence on His Life and Work,” *The Chaucer Review*, 16 (1982): 344-55. For a recent discussion of the intersectionality between literary and historical reactions to Syon see Hutchison, Ann M. “Syon Abbey Preserved: Some Historians of Syon,” in *Syon Abbey and its books: reading, writing and religion, c.1400-1700*, ed. E. A. Jones and Alexandra Walsham (Rochester: Boydell and Brewer, 2010), pp. 228-251. She notes that Charles Wriothesley’s *Chronicle of England During the Reigns of the Tudors, from A.D. 1485-1559* calls Syon a “vertues howse of religion” whereas other houses – Bury St Edmunds and Barking Abbey, for instance – are mentioned without praise.

Syon moved Margery to tears; her extraliturgical antiphonal response, in turn, moved the young man to take holy orders.

Though his broken sense-perception fails him, Audelay is intimately connected to the mystical choral modalities of Syon. In fact, his disability is the very thing that allows him to articulate the connection between the dissolution of material objects and their spiritual essences. “He that delis gostle goodis, hit is so spiritual,” Audelay says, “alse mone men as may here a mas, Vche mon his parte hole he has,” as Audelay recognizes that the mass is “neuer the lasse.”⁴⁰⁶ Choral and liturgical time transcends accidental or material reality; it does not adhere to the proportionality of material objects, and what Audelay makes a claim for in his poetry – particularly that pertaining to Syon – is the similar capability of the human spirit to receive such blessings apart from physical reality. The example of the “deeff, siek, blynd” monk Audelay is important for a discussion of *canor*, because his physical disability does not keep him from receiving the blessings conferred by Syon’s nuns.⁴⁰⁷ Audelay’s disability may not itself be a form of mystical experience, but the mass, in its infinite divisibility, imparts grace in all its plenitude as if it were mystical experience itself.

Like the mystic who leaves behind corporeality as he rises through ever-more-rarified angelic ranks, blindness and deafness force Audelay to experience song divorced from sense-experience. Unlike a mystic, however, Audelay’s sense-deprivation is anterior to hierophanic ascent rather than a result of it. Is this tenable? Is it possible to reverse-engineer mystical participation by destroying physical sensation? How is

⁴⁰⁶ Audelay, Poem 23. ll. 174-5, 179.

⁴⁰⁷ Audelay, Poem 55, l 53.

Audelay's potential for intersubjective and methexic incorporation into the *corpus mysticum* realized, despite the fact his asceticism is enforced, the involuntary consequences of the aged, sinful body (rather than a volitional act of renunciation)?

This chapter will investigate the songs of the Bridgettines at Syon, and the ways in which their embodied practice was believed to act on distant, disabled, or endangered bodies of the English nation in the late medieval period. In order to do so, it will look the Bridgettine liturgy in some detail, in particular its processional chants and chantbooks, and read them through the lens of *The Myroure of Oure Ladye*, a printed commentary on the Bridgettine lessons and chants that provides a critical close-reading of liturgical poetry and physical movements. How did Bridgettine space, in which the Office of the Hours and Mass were sung differ from the space of private devotion or public, political piety, in particular when it pertained to mystical ascents and to *musica celestis*? In what ways did Syon's liturgy, a tool of the religio-political establishment, allow the national or international body to experience *canor*? How did the choral body of nuns operate on laypeople through liturgical song, and what, if anything, sets this intersubjectival mechanism apart from mystical song as it has already been explored in this project? This chapter will investigate these questions with an eye to the processions of Syon Abbey in relation to antiphoners and graduals: what did ambulatory music do that other types of liturgical music and music-books did not?

Syon Abbey – An Introduction

Syon Abbey had its origins in a quintessentially medieval form of female authorship: according to tradition, an angel dictated the text of its Matins lessons to

Bridget of Sweden in her mother tongue.⁴⁰⁸ Bridget's confessor, Peter of Skänninge, received the liturgical chants:

Yt semyth to thy master as though hys eres and mouthe were fylled with wynde, and as though hys harte were stretched out with brenyng charite to god, as a blather full of wynde. And in that swete harte brenyng he gat knowledge of som wordes and saynges whiche he coulde not before, and how he shulde make responses, and antemps, and hymynes, and ordeyn the songe in notes.⁴⁰⁹

Though the *Myroure* makes clear to note that "ether of these twyne is of the holy gost," it is notable that the elements of the liturgy which require spiritual *inflatus* are directed to an ordained man; the historical lessons, with their narrative connection to Mary, are given to Bridget.⁴¹⁰ Both, however, are provided by angels to their recipients in moments of mystical excess. For Peter in particular, linguistic knowledge and musical knowledge are imparted in the one movement of "burning charity."

This gendered division of labor shows the ability of authority-structures to hold within themselves the implicit conditions for self-authorization, particularly in the politically tumultuous fourteenth century. Whereas Bridget is able to write the *sermo angelicus* – the angelic sermon or the rule of her order – the direct scriptural commentary

⁴⁰⁸ "Yt semyth to the as a persone shewid the tho thinges that thou hast to say. This our lady sayth to saynt Byrgyt of the angell that apperyd to her in mannes lykenes when he endyte your legende." See Blunt, John Henry, Ed. *The Myroure of Oure Ladye: containing a devotional treatise on divine service*. (London: EETS, 1873), p. 17. Bridget, whose prophetic visions and holy life led to her beatification in 1391, was the daughter of a Swedish nobleman and the wife to another. A pious laywoman, she gave birth to four sons and four daughters before her husband's death in 1344. Bridget spent much of the rest of her life in Rome, leaving the city to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1373.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 9. *The Myroure of Oure Ladye* was first written between 1415 and 1450. Although the author cannot be stated with any certainty, chances are that it was Thomas Gascoigne, Chancellor of Merton College, Oxford, from 1442-5.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

housed in antiphonal chant is presented to an ordained priest.⁴¹¹ But this division of labor also highlights the difference between musical and literary composition (one gendered male, the other female) while reinforcing their common point of origin: angelic communication. With the help of Peter and a number of other supporters within the Church hierarchy (Cardinal Adam Easton, Peter of Alvastra, and others), Bridget was able to publish and disseminate both her politico-religious visions – the *Revelationes Celestis* – and the text of her Rule.⁴¹² This rule, the *Regula Salvatoris*, was approved by Pope Urban V in 1370. From the mother house of the Bridgettines in Vadstena, Sweden, the order quickly spread throughout Europe.⁴¹³ This is a sort of advanced reverse hierophany: from mystical illumination to verbal expression and practical application, the song of the angels worked its way across the countries allied with the Roman papacy during the Great Schism.

Bridget's rule was a delicate admixture of the Augustinian rule, additions to the Augustinian framework (the aforementioned *Regula Salvatoris*), and a course of readings, psalms, and prayers that mimicked the structure of one of the most popular books of the late medieval period: the Hours of the Virgin.⁴¹⁴ Rather than run through a broad, seasonal course of prayer, the Bridgettine rule devoted each days' worship to a

⁴¹¹ Note that Hildegard von Bingen composed her own antiphons for the women of Rupertsberg. Then again, she was the only woman to be given papal dispensation to preach.

⁴¹² Cardinal Adam Easton has connections to Julian of Norwich, thus providing an ecclesiastical-hierarchical link between English mysticism and continental mystics.

⁴¹³ For a history and description of medieval Bridgettine foundations, see Hojer, Torvald Magnusson. *Studier i. Vadstena klosters och birgittinordens historia intill midten at 1400-talet*, (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksells, 1905), and Nyberg, Tore. *Birgittinische Klostergründungen des Mittelalters*, (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1965).

⁴¹⁴ The Hours of the BVM are generally interpreted as a hyperfeminine mode of pious involvement.

different aspect of Mary's life, and this pattern repeated weekly throughout the entire year.⁴¹⁵ Thus Marian devotion assumed a central position in the life of the Bridgettine house:

In other chyrches, the houres of the vyrgyn my mother be sayde fyrste, yet our lorde wyl do that reuerence to his holy mother, that in thys order the houres of her shall be sayd after the houres of the day to her most worship.⁴¹⁶

This commentary on the nuns' office is taken from the *Myroure of Oure Ladye*, a commentary on Syon's worship practice first written for the sisters in the mid-15th century, and printed in 1519.⁴¹⁷ It is perhaps the fullest account of liturgical exegesis in Middle English.

What the men sang was not unimportant. The brothers' office was used to, in the *Myroure's* words, "keep the tyme," while the sisters reserved the right to "fulfylle the

⁴¹⁵ Sundays was reserved for the Trinity, and the joy of God of the advent and work of Mary; Monday for Creation and the Joy of the Angels in the advent of Mary; Tuesday for the Patriarchs and Prophets; Wednesday for Mary's Immaculate Conception, birth, and childhood; Thursday for the Annunciation and Nativity of Christ; Friday focused on Mary's suffering at the crucifixion of her son; and Saturday was devoted to Mary's life and work following Christ's resurrection as well as her Assumption.

⁴¹⁶ *Myroure of Oure Ladye*, p. 25. The Bridgettine order retained the model of female leadership begun by its founder. The abbess of each house had jurisdiction not only over the sixty nuns who lived in the convent, but also over the thirteen monks, four deacons, and eight lay brothers who carried out their worship in the same space. The men and women traded the use of the chapel in an unceasing course of prayer: the monks sang their masses and Office of the Hours; the nuns followed each hour of the men's worship with their own, complete—albeit simplified—specifically Bridgettine regimen, which was dedicated to the adoration of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

⁴¹⁷ *The Myroure's* author may have been Thomas Gascoyne (d. 1458), the Chancellor of Oxford University. Seven partial or full manuscript copies exist: Aberdeen University, MS W.P.R.4.18; Cambridge University Library MS A.B.10.41; Lambeth Palace Library 2.6.6; Bishop Cosin's Library, Durham H.II.24, Warwick Church Library, British Museum Library MS C.11.b.8; British Library, Selden MS A.A.95, and the Peterborough Cathedral Library S.7.P.3.30.

offyce of theyr seruyce somewhat more tareyngly,” or to linger in devotional song.⁴¹⁸ The brothers’ liturgy also followed a liturgical program particular to each Bridgettine house’s location: in Vadstena, the monks used the rite of the diocese of Linköping; in the other Continental houses, they adopted local cathedral uses for their office. Syon Abbey was no different: the men used the Sarum rite, which was not only the most popular and ornate liturgy of the late medieval period, but was also product of Salisbury cathedral, a space consecrated to the Virgin Mary, in honor of her, and a rite that was increasing in popularity during the early 15th century. As such, this most complex and ornate of liturgies was also highly appropriate for Syon in particular.⁴¹⁹ In this way, the monks provided a liturgical backbone, a counterpoint to the meditative, lingering, and iterative Bridgettine liturgy, interweaving the *u-topos* (or no-place) of the Marian Bridgettine Office with the place-memory of the Salisbury rite, while at the same time reducing the complexity of locality-contingent liturgies to the role of timekeeping. The women’s Bridgettine Office was free, because of the “less ecstatic” devotional form of the men’s office, to elongate and separate from time; it was also free of connection to a specific place. This is like the semantic deconstruction of the *Cloud of Unknowing* in its moments of ecstasy: just as the one-word euphonics of “Fire!” and “Jesu!” indicate their special status to the extent that they break from the rhythms of and patterns of everyday speech, so did the devotional performance of Bridgettine liturgical song draw its meaning in contradistinction to the “normal” practice of their monastic brethren.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid, p. 25. This command to St Bridget can be found in the *Revelationes extravagantes*, Cap. iii.

⁴¹⁹ The liturgical texts of the Sarum rite mark at a number of places their attentiveness to the BVM, though in the late-14th and 15th centuries, as the use was popularized and spread throughout England by Archbishop Arundel.

In her study of the liturgical office of the nuns of Syon Abbey, Anne Bagnall Yardley discusses this devotional practice in literally ambivalent terms, stating that the “single-mindedness of the nun’s liturgy... severely restricts the variety and quantity of music they sing. The Marian emphasis runs the risk of depriving the nuns of the full gamut of liturgies, feast days, and images that their Benedictine and even Cistercian counterparts enjoy.”⁴²⁰ She notes in passing that the nuns’ experience was “more intensely cloistered” and “limited in scope” than nuns of other orders.⁴²¹ What she means by “more cloistered” and “limited in scope” is, ostensibly, that a more florid *sanctorale* or *temporale* – and the music that accompanies it – would somehow allow the Bridgettines greater access to the broader Christian community and thus “free” them through connectivity and musical co-performance.

In other words, the nuns of Syon sang a liturgy far simpler than their sisters in the Celestine, Gilbertine, and Benedictine Orders. Furthermore, the *Myroure* refers to a number of English translations, rather than Latin originals, as *de rigueur* for Bridgettine reading practice. These include Richard Rolle’s *Commentary on the Psalms*, Mechthild of Hackeborn’s *Booke of Gostlye Grace*, and even English versions of the Bible. As stated above, the ownership of many of the most popular Middle English devotional

⁴²⁰ Yardley, Anne Bagnall. *Performing Piety: Musical Culture in medieval English Nunneries* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), p. 203. Yardley’s analysis of the *Cantus Sororum* is largely dependent on Thomas Gascoigne’s *Myroure* and on the Middle English version of the Additions to the rule. For another study of Bridgettine song, see Zieman, Katherine. “Reading, Singing and Understanding: Constructions of the Literacy of Women Religious in late medieval England.” *Learning and Literacy in medieval England and Abroad*. Sarah Rees Jones, Ed. (Turnhout: Brepols, c2003), pp. 97-120, as well as Connolly, Margaret and Linne R. Mooney. “Singing from the same hymn-sheet: two Bridgettine manuscripts.” *Design and distribution of late medieval manuscripts in England*. (York: York medieval Press, 2008), pp. 139 -160).

⁴²¹ Yardley, p. 204.

treatises indicate that the nuns *did* indeed read – often – in their mother tongue.⁴²²

However, Ann Hutchison notes that the nuns read more in Latin than *The Myroure's* introduction might have us believe: their library also included Bridget's *Liber Celestis*, Walter Hilton's *Scala Perfectionis*, the Heinrich Suso's *Horologium Sapientiae*, Latin sermons, and multiple treatises within the *disce mori* and *discretio spirituum* traditions including Richard Rolle's *Incendium Amoris* and a number of Carthusian miscellanies.⁴²³

I have already addressed the ways in which some of these Latin and English devotional works might inflect or inform an understanding of anglic song that is nuanced, highly formal, and difficult; and the strain of mysticism practiced across the Thames by the monks of the Charterhouse of Sheen, men of the same monastic order as John Norton and Richard Methley, suggest that the nuns of Syon went beyond the work of liturgical devotion and practiced their *Cantus Sororem* as a form of *musica celestis*.⁴²⁴

⁴²² These include Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection* (in English), Marguerite Porete's *Mirror of Simple Souls*, Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesu Christ*, and most of Richard Rolle's English *oeuvre*, as well as, rather startlingly, Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes*.

⁴²³ Hutchison, Ann M. "What the Nuns Read: Literary Evidence from the English Bridgettine House, Syon Abbey." *Mediaeval Studies* 57 (1995): 205-22, p. 212.

⁴²⁴ Yardley's critique is helpful, but it also forecloses some possible avenues of investigation. First, it supposes that the contemplative content – if contemplation can *have* content, that is – of the Bridgettine liturgy was for the nuns alone. Second, it spends too little time considering the codependent performance of the men's and women's Offices, and the striking ways in which the Bridgettine chants and processions and Sarum chants and processions. Third, while Yardley does not state this explicitly, her reading suggests that the simplicity of the *Cantus Sororum* is a problem of the Latin-illiteracy of the nuns, and that the goal of the Order's work was an easy accommodation of a small set of Latin chants within a larger, almost entirely English, program of devotional reading. In a broader analysis of the *Cantus Sororem* I would like to address these issues, but do not have space to do them justice in this chapter.

Although Yardley does not talk at length about the complicating factors of Bridgettine simplicity, she does note that repetition is not a negative outcome of the constrained practice of feminine Bridgettine spirituality. Rather, it allows for contemplative possibility. “It is easy to envision that the Syon nun soon memorized the weekly office. In just two years of monastic life, she would have sung each chant a hundred times.”⁴²⁵ Memorization allowed for more perfect performance – at least in external matters – freeing the nun to focus fully on herself as an intentional being. The *Myroure* makes the most of this as well, noting that God “taketh more hede of the harte, then of the voyce.”⁴²⁶ This is a commonplace that Yardley as well as medieval readers used to complicate Bridgittine simplicity. Like single-syllable exclamations – “Fire!” or “Out!” or “Jesu!” repeated by Rolle, the *Cloud of Unknowing*, or Carthusian diarists – the *liturgy* of the nuns of Syon itself was turned into a pious interjection, its semantic content eventually overridden by contemplative and phatic resonances. The *Cantus Sororum* is a concession to the “frailty” of the feminine mind; but it is also a simultaneous invitation to

⁴²⁵ Yardley, p. 226. Her study touches briefly on the antiphons, responsories, and hymns of the *Cantus Sororum*, but does not go into any real detail on any of them. The antiphons can be found in edited form from Continental sources in Servatius, Viveca. *Cantus Sororum: Musik- und liturgiegeschichtliche Studien zu den Antiphonen des birgittinischen Eigenrepertoires, Nebst 91 Transkriptionen*. (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1990). Cambridge University Library, Additional MS 7634 includes two complete hymns: *Virgo passentem* (the music is taken from *O gloriosa domina*, an older chant), and *O veneranda trinitas*, as well as festal and ferial antiphons in honor of St Bridget (*Gaude birgitta*).

⁴²⁶ *Myroure*, 35. Also note on page 57: “There ys neyther syngynge, ne redynge that may please god of it selfe, but after the dysposycyon of the reder or synger. thereafter yt plesyth, or dysplesyth. For oure lorde taketh hede to the harte and to thentente, and not to the outwarde voyce” and on 60: “For the harte is not cleen from synne, when the songe delyteth more the synger then the thynge that ys songe. And yt ys in all wyse abhominable agenste god, whant the lyftyng vp the voyce, is more for the heres then for god.”

meditation and mystical *canor* not unlike that projected by the male mystics of the earlier chapters of this dissertation.

The *Myroure* notes the reappropriation of music and readings from the Bridgettine Office of the Hours throughout the week for use on special feast days:

For as moche as youre seruyce ys of oure glorious Lady whyche ys departed in seuen storyes. after the seuen daies of the wyke as is before sayde; therfore ye haue not many chaunges after the varyaunce of feastes. and ofte tymes of the yere. as the comon seruyce of the churche vseth. But in diuerse festes. and tymes ye say some of the same seuen storyes syuersely as is most acordynge therto.⁴²⁷

The *Myroure* makes a point of going through the chapters and Oorisons of each of these special masses and offices. The feasts specifically mentioned are the Conception and Nativity of Mary, which both use the Wednesday lessons, as does the feast of St Anne. Annunciation, the Christmas Season, Candlemas, and the Feast of the Visitation all use Thursday's lesson; the Assumption Saturday's. Michelmas uses Monday's; Friday's story is used from the fifth Sunday in Lent until Easter.⁴²⁸ The reasons for this reuse are thematic, and obviously meant to aid the women in the easy incorporation of additional modes of worship without overcomplication of their liturgical repertoire.

It is, however, silent on one salient point: how did festival processions occur, and how did they complicate the liturgical ritual of festial days? Unlike the Office of the Hours, which the nuns of Syon sang every week, feast days required engagement in a protracted, semiotically heightened liturgical performance. And yet, specific reference to processions on feast days are almost totally absent from the *Myroure*. The only overt reference to ambulatory worship is, in fact, not at all salutary:

⁴²⁷ Ibid, p. 277.

⁴²⁸ Ibid, p. 278.

Oure holy mother saynt Byrgyt had in reuelacyon, and wrote to a seculer clarke that suche walkynge to and fro in seruyce tyme is a shewyng of an vnstable and a vagant harte and of a slowe sowle and of lytell charyte and deuocyon.⁴²⁹

Perhaps it is that the “walkynge to and fro” here is better understood as doing anything contrary to the dictates of the ordinal. For the *Myroure* says next that

Tho bokes that say how som haue moste deuocyon syttyng, or else whether yt be syttyng or knelyng or goyng. or standyng. a man shulde do, as he can fele moste deuocyon; such saynges ar to be vnderstand of tho prayers and deuociouns that a man chosyth to say or do after hys owne wyll.⁴³⁰

This seems to be a direct response to Richard Rolle. “I sit and sing of love-longing,”

Rolle says in one his English poems, and this sentiment also appears in both his

Incendium Amoris and the ninth lesson of the *Officium* written in his honor.⁴³¹ The

Myroure makes a distinction between the extralitururgical, private, and essentially

antisocial movements of Rollean devotion and those that are commanded by a monastic

rule. Within the confines of liturgical expression, bodily movement-as-adiaphora

becomes an impossibility. Still, the *Myroure* gives no real gloss of what “processing”

was meant to mean; it give no certainty of interpretation as it does for reading Bridgettine

antiphons, psalms, and hymns.

⁴²⁹ Ibid, p. 62-63.

⁴³⁰ Ibid, p. 63.

⁴³¹ Lessons from the Office include a number of references to these devotional postures: *Sedebam quippe in quadam capella, et dum suauitate orationis vel meditacionis multum delectarer, subito sens in me ardorem insolitum et iocundum (Officium et miracula, xxxvii), and Dum enim in eadem capella sederem, et in nocte ante cenam Pascheos, prout potui, decantarem, quasi tumultum psallentium vel potius canentium super me auscultau. Cumque celestibus et orando toto desiderio intenderem, nescio quomodo, mox in me concentum mirum sensi, et delectabilissimam armoniam celitus excepi mecum manentem in mente (ibid. xxxvii).* Richard Methley and John Norton also use this method of contemplative positioning.

The Myroure of Oure Ladye and Choral Communities

There are two broad issues regarding angelic song and the Bridgettine liturgy. First, what did Latin liturgical praxis mean for the nuns, and how did they understand *canor* in their monastic context? The processions of the Nuns of Syon, show the ways in which music and Latin text connected the angelically inspired Bridgettine liturgy to a specifically English spatiotemporality of *musica celestis*. Second, the simplicity of the *Cantus Sororem*'s liturgy is not merely another characteristic reinforcing its reputation for hyperinclosure: as evidenced by Margery Kempe and John Audelay, the Bridgettine nun still had an effect on the community around her. How might Syon have played a part in constructing a specifically English form of *musica celestis*? Here, "English" does not mean only vernacularity or literary culture, but, rather, the religiopolitical production of nationhood, and the role that *canor* played in constructing political identity. Syon's liturgy and its devotional primers provided the nuns with a means of reading their own liturgical practice, and with the advent of print, these texts were also available to the entire reading nation of England. How might this have affected 15th- and 16th-century English religious politics?

The translation and exposition of the Latin that the *Myroure* provides is meant so that

they that se this boke and rede yt may better vnderstande yt then they that here yt, and se yt not.⁴³²

⁴³² *Myroure*, p. 70. This comment comes at the end of a section of the *Myroure* dealing with informative exposition and its direct effect on the affect. The next sentences in the text obviously indicate that the *Myroure* was read aloud to the nuns in the refectory,

While this applies first and foremost to the nuns, it also speaks to the reading public of monks, laymen, and pilgrims: those people who could hear the nuns sing, but for whom the visual elements of the *Cantus Sororem* were beyond reach. Even though the nuns of Syon could not be *seen*, they could be *heard*: not only literally, as Margery Kempe's visit attests, but also textually, as their printed matter was read in private homes.⁴³³ And so, the text follows the nun around the cloister:

Somtyme ye sytte; somtyme ye stonde; somtyme ye enclyne; somtyme ye knele, now towarde the aulter, now towarde the quyere, now in stalles, now in the myddes. And in all thys.ye medel hymnes with psalmes, and psalmes with antempnes, and antempnes with versycles, and lessons with responces, and responces with verse, and so fourthe of many suche other. And all to the praysynge of our Lorde Iesu cryste and of hys moste reuerent moder our lady, and so to excersyce the body to quyckenynge of the soulle; that therwith all soche bodely obseruaunces shulde not be founde without cause of gostly vnderstondynge.⁴³⁴

For the lay devout, the printed text of the *Myroure* stripped away the walls of the abbey, as the book itself became the performing body of the nun, its doppelgänger, moving like a reflection in a mirror. Within the formal framework of the Office, the mixture, or *medeling*, of movement had a narrative structure, and its entanglement can be seen as a

meaning that it, too, constituted a norming activity meant to underscore incorporative devotion performed in the liturgy.

⁴³³ In an analagous way, Marileen Cré argues for the presence of Julian of Norwich and Marguerite Porete “in” the Carthusian order. I would argue that the “presence” of the nuns of Syon operates more immediately and strongly than either of these, given that a) the nuns of Syon were known as such by their reading populace and b) it was as a result of their position as such that they were capable of disseminating their texts. Cré, Marleen. “Women in the Charterhouse? Julian of Norwich’s *Revelations* and Marguerite Porete’s *Mirror of Simple Souls* in British Library, MS Additional 37790.” *Writing Religious Women: Female Spirituality and Textual Practices in late medieval England*. Denis Renevey and Christina Whitehead, Eds. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), p. 43-62.

⁴³⁴ *Myroure*, p. 96-7.

source of meaning beyond the text, as bodies sat, stood, inclined, kneeled, and turned according to the rules of the Order.

The *Myroure* attempts to make up for the broken structuralism of book-reading – the ability that each reader had the opportunity to read contrary to the liturgical plan – by reading into the meaning of the liturgical sign. It does not merely present the moving, singing female body, but it also reads meditative interiority onto this unseen, performing subject.⁴³⁵ While the nun attending to her liturgical duties is fulfilling a ritual procedure, the nun at leisure, like the layperson with a printed version of the *Myroure* in front of her, can deconstruct these ritual formulae into mystical “sometimes;” at any time, in any place, in *ictu oculi*, the gaze of the reader upon the open book allows for the particular blessing of liturgical expression. A simple liturgy of singing and reading, when understood in this light, is easily adapted into secular practices of prayerful listening; bodily movements and even liturgical moments can be broken into infinitesimals, each indivisible devotional nugget imparting the plenitudinous grace of the whole.⁴³⁶

What does the *Myroure* say about liturgical song? Very little of the text is devoted to the meaning of the lines of musical notes prepared on a stave for the nun to sing; the *Myroure* is primarily interested in the text of the liturgy rather than its sound. And if one takes into account the readership of the *Myroure*, this makes sense: no matter how simple the plainchant, musical notation requires an extra skill to read, one that the

⁴³⁵ Note how the “excersyce” of the body leads to the “quyckenynge” of the soul, and the suggestive Rollean counter-implications. Where Richard Rolle provides the abnegation of posture, saying that whether he sits, stands, or walks, he will still find a certain spiritual rest, liturgical framing makes the reader hypervigilant of postures and movements.

⁴³⁶ The *Myroure* takes the formalist liturgy and turns it into a postmodernist sort of intertextual play.

lay devout may not have possessed, nor have had a need for. And yet one wishes that the author of the *Myroure*, perhaps for the sake of the nuns, had been a bit more forthcoming when it came to the music. His entire musicological commentary consists of a commonplace etymology in liturgical exegesis. “Ye synge an hymphne in worship and praysynge of her and then psalmes and antempnes,” says the *Myroure*, and then he glosses the etymological and mystical meaning of both words:

Thys worde *Hymphne* ys a worde of grew. and ys as moche to saye. as a praysynge. And thys worde *psalme*. is a worde of grew also. and ys as moche as to saye also as praysynge.⁴³⁷

Here are two words and two types of liturgical songs. The one – ὕμνος – can be translated as “praising,” while the other – ψαλμοί – is, more specifically, “to make music.” The hymn implies meditative intentionality; the psalm, activity. The *Myroure* misses out on this piece of lexicographical nuance, but, thankfully, the traditional definitions of “hymn” and “psalm” allow our narrator to touch on this distinction:

Hymphnes betoken that praysynge that ys syde of harte wyth tongue, and psalmes betoken that praysynge that ys done of harte in dede. By hymfnes therfore is vnderstonded the lyfe of them that prayse god in contemplacyon. And by psalmes ys vnderstonded the conuersacion of them that prayse god in dedes of actyue lyfe.⁴³⁸

Although the *Myroure* says nothing about the musical notes of the *Cantus Sororem*, we know something about its musical life: every moment is a parallactic between contemplative and active existence.

⁴³⁷ *Myroure*, p. 90.

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

The hours of the day are also divided into contemplative and active times.

Matins, Prime, Terce, Sext, and None are contemplative, and in these hours, hymns are intoned before the psalms. Lauds, Evensong, and Compline, conversely, are for times

moste occupied in outwarde dedes and lesse in gostly excercyse[...] and for the moste parte of people of all the worlde ar occupied moste with dedes of actyue lyfe. Therefore the seruyce of holy chyrche that is comon to all begynneth at euensonge.⁴³⁹

For this reason, evensong stresses psalms rather than hymns. In this way, the day does not only include the interchange of action with contemplation, but of cloister with the world outside of it. The “common” activity of evensong and compline closes the day of the cloistered body, which then reawakens at matins for contemplative practice. The author of the *Myroure* reworks the active and contemplative lives into musical, liturgical forms; thus the nun remains contemplative even as she engages in the “activity” of the psalmodic performance.

Nethelesse neyther hymphnes ar sayde without psalmes, ne psalmes wythout hymphnes, for contemplatyue lyfe may not be wythout actyue lyfe, ne actyue lyfe wythout contemplatyue.⁴⁴⁰

If psalms represent good deeds, the antiphons appended to and drawn out of them indicate charity. “There may no dede be good. but yf yt be begone of charite. and rewled by charite in the doynge[...] the antempne ys fyrste begonne of one and afterwarde ended

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 91. This section continues: “After hymnes. ye saye *Gloria tibi domine*. And after psalmes. *Gloria patri*. For whether ye be occupied in contemplacyon gostly or in other bodely dedes; all oughte ye to do to that ende. that the blyssed trinyte be prayssed and worshyped therby.”

of all, in token that charite beginneth fyrste of god.”⁴⁴¹ This allegorical representation results in a glossing of the movement of the sisters in the choir:

The syster that begynneth the antempne alone standeth turned to the aulter, and afterwarde turneth to the quyere in token that charite begynneth in the loue of god and afterwarde stretcheth to al other. The antempne before the psalme is begonne but a lytell, but after yt is songe all hole, tokenynge that charite wthout dedes is but lytell.⁴⁴²

In antiphonal song, the sisters stand facing each other, in “token that the gyftes of god that eche one hathe receyued oughte to be vsed to the helpynge, eche of other.”⁴⁴³

Contemplative and active life exist as a dialogic pair, mutually defining each other in a system of production that is reminiscent of Richard Rolle’s articulation of the same in the *Form of Living*.⁴⁴⁴

From a general overview of practice, the *Myroure* goes on to explicate nearly every antiphon, psalm, and hymn in detail. The only exceptions to this are the processional antiphons made for the sisters of Syon, namely, those in praise of St Catherine and those for St Bridget herself; there is a simple reason for this: these antiphons were penned after the *Myroure* was written. At any rate, the theme of interior versus exterior lives continues here, at the more minute level. Take, say, the antiphon for Sunday, *O amabilis virgo*, which refers to Syon by name:

⁴⁴¹ Ibid, p. 95.

⁴⁴² Ibid.

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴ The *Form of Living*, as described in Chapter 1, opens with a treatise on the ways in which men fall into sin, and from there discusses how the life of the solitary is most conducive to the delight, sweetness, joy, and melody of mystic proximity to God. (Richard Rolle: *Prose and Verse*. (London: EETS, 1988), p. 6.

Vnderstonde by Syon specyally yf ye wylle thys monastery of Syon,
whereupon our lady is chyef lady and quyene. But generally and more to
her worsyp, vnderstonde by Syon all holy chyrche.⁴⁴⁵

The *Cantus Sororem*, with its course of antiphons, hymns, and sequences applicable to all Bridgettine houses, is both specialized and generalized. *O amabilis virgo* belongs uniquely and solely to the nuns of Syon, even more so than any other Bridgettine house. At the same time, an act of charitable reading opens up the practice of worship to the mystical communion encompassed by “all holy chyrche.” A Bridgettine metaphysics manifests in externalization, in the construction of the singing choral body as the church writ large. The gloss on the hymn to the Virgin, *O trinitatis gloria* stresses this point as a part of the labor of the professed religious: “Ye pray not onely for youre selfe. but saynge your seruyce in the persone of holy chryche. ye pray for all that cryste dyed for.”⁴⁴⁶ Antiphons provide a moment in which the nun, as a choral member, surpasses and incorporates the Church in her performance; hymns are capable of the same agglutination. The paraliturgical text, written originally for the nuns and then published and distributed beyond its walls in the age of print, charts a devotional pathway that mirrors the *Myroure*’s own allegorical reading of itself. Everything that occurs in the *Myroure*’s understanding of the *Cantus Sororem* is simultaneously contemplative and active.

⁴⁴⁵ *Myroure*, 97.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 93. This section continues with an argument based on the original Latin of the hymn: “For ye saye not *gratas* and *quas* that myghte be sayde onely of you. but ye say *gratos* and *quos* that whyle ye knytte *nos* therto; muste nedes be vnderstonde bothe of men and wymen.” This illustrative of a number of kind of awsome things relating to Latin language acquisition and pedagogy, as well as connecting these grammatical structures to a synecdochal appropriation of part for whole.

Still, there are many points on which the *Myroure* is silent, focusing on points of Bridgettine exceptionality rather than on its relationship to the Church at large.⁴⁴⁷ The chant tones and texts – whether hymns, antiphons, and responsories, or prayers and litanies – were borrowed wholesale from the common use of the Catholic church are one example. The addition of two saints’ offices also mixed older material with new: these were the texts/tunes for St Bridget’s Day (Bridget was beatified by Boniface IX in October, 1391, her feast day on July 23rd) and for St Catherine of Sweden (who died in 1381, and whose feast was on March 22).⁴⁴⁸ The *Myroure* is silent, as described above, on all of these counts. The *Myroure* is also largely silent on the topic of processions and what they might mean. Therefore, for an understanding of what the processional manuscripts did and meant for the nuns, we must turn to the manuscripts themselves, and to the evidence of use that they provide on their own terms.

The Processionals: Manuscriptal Evidence and Musical Borrowing

Why are the processionals from Syon Abbey important?⁴⁴⁹ Modern sociological and anthropological studies commonly mark processions as metonymic for the

⁴⁴⁷ The *Myroure* makes a point of saying that this information can be found in the Ordinal. While it does do some work to gloss parts of the Mass – the *Kyrie* and the *Gloria* (which is a troped Marian gradual), *Credo*, collect, and gradual come to mind here – much is left uncommented-upon.

⁴⁴⁸ St Catherine was never fully beatified as a result of the Reformation, but proceedings were begun by Pope Innocent VIII in 1484 with the translation of her relics to Vadstena. Hymns and a partial office to her exist in the processionals of Syon Abbey, among other places.

⁴⁴⁹ One of the few sociological and historical analyses of processionals as formative of the subject can be found in Ashley, Kathleen and Wim Hüsken’s, Eds., *Moving Subjects: Processional Performance in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*. (Amsterdam: *Ludus: medieval and Early Renaissance Theatre and Drama*, 2001). For

carnavalesque, for a time in which the social order threatens to be overwhelmed and is, through the very containment of this moment, simultaneously reinforced. The late medieval Church's increasing investment in processions on high feast days – Candlemas, Palm Sunday, Rogation Days, Christmas, Easter, and so forth – highlights the pageantry and conviviality of secular or cathedral processions. The Corpus Christi cycle, with its guild involvement and spectacularity, places the civic practice of religion in a spatiotemporal language that mimicked the daily processions of professed religious.⁴⁵⁰ These festivals opened up the space of the ecclesiastical hierarchy into a wider sphere, marking the boundaries of religious discourse even as they deconstructed it.⁴⁵¹ In essence, the ritual “language” of the processional is another example of the mutually constituted place of active and contemplative life, of song and of *canor*.

Syon's processions, which were contained entirely within the abbey, both partake in this practice of boundary-marking while simultaneously rejecting a number of its most salient sociological elements: in Syon, the bodies of the women were heard (certainly by each other and the monks, and most probably by pilgrims, as well), but likely not seen by anyone other than themselves. The nuns were limited in their ambitus, the reach of their

the most salient historical analysis concomitant with these points, see Bailey, Terence. *The Processions of Sarum and the Western Church*. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of medieval Studies, 1971).

⁴⁵⁰ See de Grazia, Margreta. “World Pictures, Modern Periods, and the Early Stage,” in *A New History of Early English Drama*, Cox, John D. and David Scott Kastan, Eds (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), as well as The civic action found in Chester, York, and elsewhere reinforces the idea that processionals were the “privileged mode of public expression in the late Middle Ages” (Ashley and Hüsken, 10).

⁴⁵¹ Processions comprise “an independent ritual genre, fusing narrative, sound, and image in unique ways.” Synaesthetic experience. Lawrence Sullivan “The symbolic experience of the unity of the senses enables a culture to entertain itself with the idea of the unity of meaning.” See Sullivan, Lawrence. “Sound and Senses: Toward a Hermeneutics of Performance,” *History of Religions* 26 (1986), p. 8.

procession never straying farther than the open grave visited after terce, itself located just outside the walls of the nave. This does not mean that their production was not – in a less overtly physical sense – just as connected to the broadening of English devotional space as a York or Chester play or anything issuing from Salisbury’s cathedral walls. While the antiphons, responses, and readings of the weekly office are organized and contained within the Bridgettine Rule and explicated in the *Myroure of Oure Ladye*, the processions transgress the boundaries of this regular and critically-circumscribed use.

The tactile, visual, and aural elements which combine in civic or secular processions (along with their potential for sublimating atavistic urges), are challenged by visual withholding. Syon’s processions are, for the outside world, only ever imagined – hardly touched on even by the *Myroure* – and as such are like the rarified *musica celestis* that is also always disarticulated from sense-perceptibles and from physical knowledge. They are a sort of imagined *musica celestis* unto themselves.

Because they contain a portion of worship not explicated by the Rule or the *Myroure*, the Processional manuscripts provide an as-yet-uncaptured glimpse into the movement of the nuns around their conventual space. After all, the processionals were singular: they were not merely song-books, nor prayerbooks. Nor were they, like graduals, antiphoners, or lectionaries, partbooks meant only for the use of the masspriest, chantress, or lector. Rather, they were playbooks in shorthand: manuscripts that provided explicit references to what is often the entirety of an liturgical element over the course of an entire year. They contain not only processional chants, but also prayers, antiphons, responses, and verses. Of the three manuscripts included in this study, all of them also contain varying degrees of descriptive rubrication – stage directions that explicate

heterotopic movements not necessarily rehearsed in the weekly iteration of the *Sermo Angelicus*.⁴⁵²

There are three medieval processionals from the women's choir of Syon. These are Syon Abbey, MS 1 (hereafter SA), Cambridge, University Library, Additional MS 8885 (hereafter CUL), and Cambridge, St John's College MS 139 (SJC).⁴⁵³ Although the conservative style of chant notation and the gothic script make dating the manuscripts difficult, two of them—SA and SJC—can be dated to the first half century or so after the abbey's foundation.⁴⁵⁴ Both SA and SJC include, in a different, later hand at the end of the manuscripts, responses for the Feast St Catherine of Sweden (24 March). Because Pope Innocent VIII first gave permission for Catherine to be venerated as a saint in 1484, the bulk of these two processionals' production must have occurred before 1484. The obvious later addition of St Catherine's Office indicates that these two manuscripts continued to be used after 1484. Compare the following images, for instance, from SJC:

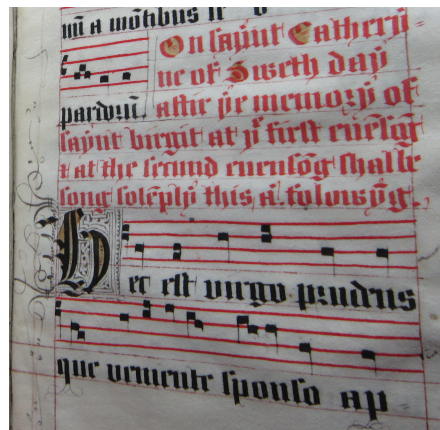
⁴⁵² These processionals were meant for each one of the sixty nuns, carried in common, shared by pairs of nuns.

⁴⁵³ Another manuscript, Oxford, St John's College, MS 169, also exists.

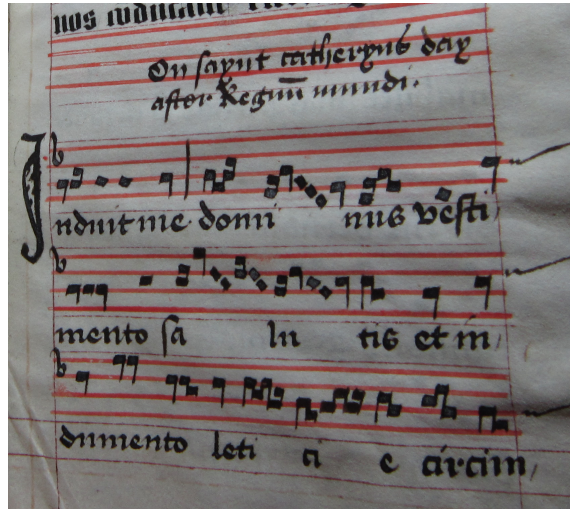
⁴⁵⁴ For the identification of the annotating hand in SA and SJC as Thomas Raille, see de Hamel, Christopher. "The medieval MSS of Syon Abbey, and their dispersal" in *Syon Abbey: the library of the Bridgettine nuns and their peregrinations after the Reformation* (London, 1991), p.85. MS. South Brent, Syon Abbey 1, Processionale, is said to have been written by the same hand, see Ker, R. N. and A. J. Piper, *medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, vol. 4 (Oxford, 1992), p. 335. For a complete description and contents of each of these manuscripts, see the appendix.



SJC fol. 95v (Hand 1), Antiphon, “*Salve regina*” from the Lenten season, after the litany



SJC fol. 106r (Hand 2), Antiphon, “*Hec est virgo prudens*,” from the second evensong for St Catherine’s day



SJC fol 108r (Hand 3), Antiphon “*Induit me dominus,*” antiphon for Saint Catherine’s day

What we have at the end of SJC is evidence of a manuscript that is growing along with Syon. As St Catherine becomes an object of veneration, antiphons particular to her service are added. Later, perhaps as the convent grew and required more time for its members to transverse the space of the procession, the processional songs expanded as well. The addition of a second and a third antiphon to St Catherine in yet another hand suggests both the increased importance of Bridget’s daughter to Syon’s conception of itself, as well as a need for extra musical time in which to remember her – both practically and spiritually. As Syon grew, its focus shifted away from devotion to Mary, transferring some of the honor to St Bridget and then, at the end of its existence in pre-Reformation England, to her daughter Catherine. That is, as history accumulated, Syon’s spiritual ambitus expanded as well. The nuns were not Marian drones intoning a liturgy that did not admit of change: although a couple of the antiphons and responses which

appear in the Processionals for Bridget and Catherine are merely copied from extant festivals, most are unique.

SA and SJC are nearly identical in organizational plan, beginning with antiphons and responses for Palm Sunday (*Ramus Palmarum*) and continuing directly to Easter (*Paschus*) while skipping the ferias of Holy Week, and from there run through the major and minor rogation days. Both manuscripts then skip the entirety of the weeks after Pentecost in ordinary time and list Christmas (*Natalis Domini*), Circumcision (*Circumcisionis*), Twelfth Night (*Epiphanius* or Epiphany), the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and Annunciation. The litany follows, along with a number of Marian antiphons. The second half of the church year, including Whistunday (Pentecost), Trinity Sunday, and Corpus Christi come next, after which are antiphons for the feasts of specific saints, which occur in ordinary time: the Translation of Saint Bridget, the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist, the feasts of Saints Peter and Paul, the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin, Relic Sunday, the Nativity of Saint Bridget, Saint Anne's Day, St Peter ad Vincula, Assumption Day, the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, Michelmas, Dedication Day, the Canonization of St Bridget, All Hallows', and the Conception of the Blessed Virgin. Following this is a second litany with a number of antiphons common to the Sarum liturgy.

The case with CUL is more abstruse: this processional contains only half of the church year, beginning with the Visitation of the Virgin (2 July) on 1v and ending with an antiphon for Christmas (25 December).⁴⁵⁵ After this point, another hand continues the

⁴⁵⁵ The Christmas antiphon is *Gaudendum nobis est*. There is an additional antiphon for Easter, as well, *Regina celi letare*, but this does not appear to be connected with any

manuscript with the two responses for the Feast of St Augustine (28 August), along with the response and antiphon for the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul (29 June).⁴⁵⁶ CUL would therefore have been part of a two-volume set, the other half, now lost, containing the Feast of Circumcision (1 January) through to the Nativity of St John (24 June), and as such would never have contained the Feast of Catherine of Sweden, which is the dating marker of SA and SJC. This makes sense: the processional developed primarily out of a need to have a small, portable handbook for those chants and prayers which were to be sung while walking, and as such, the smaller the book could be, the more its use value increased. It is impossible to know for certain whether the two volumes that CUL was originally a part of were created before or after the introduction of this feast into the Bridgettine office.

However, the one telling point is one final addition in a different – possibly later – hand at the end of CUL. This addition is a complete rendition of the *Salve festa dies* for the Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus (7 August) in a hand that appears to be consciously mimicking the one that has come before it.⁴⁵⁷ The rubrics here are in English, further suggesting that this is a later addition. The inclusion of the full prose in CUL seems planned, and the hand at work in this portion of the manuscript can also be found in a devotional miscellany of the early-16th century; it is likely that CUL was a later

particular processional rite, and is variously associated with any number of festivals in honor of the Virgin Mary. More specifically, it is used in the *Cantus Sororem* as near the end of Compline on Sunday. See *Myroure*, folio 144r. CUL, pages 206 and 209, respectively.

⁴⁵⁶ The two responses for the Feast of St Augustine are *Miles Christi gloriose* and *Sancte Augustine Christi*. See CUL, pages 212 and 214, and 218-221.

⁴⁵⁷ CUL, pages 222-231.

production than both SJC and SA.⁴⁵⁸ Both facts are important. First, both SA and SJC add, in the interstices of the office to St Catherine of Sweden at the end of each manuscript, one verse of this same *Salve*. In both, it is as if it were an afterthought.⁴⁵⁹ Second, the *Salve* that is added in SJC appears to be in exactly the same hand as the one which worked on CUL. On this evidence, it appears that, not only was CUL a later production than SA and SJC, but that all three processional books were used simultaneously. It is even probable that they were used until the closure of Syon in 1539.



CUL pp. 221-222. Antiphons “*Gloriosi principes terre*” and “*Salve festa dies*,” showing the switch from the main hand of the manuscript to the second hand.

⁴⁵⁸ Item number 19, folio 144 ff, Lambeth Palace 3597. See Pickering, O.S. and V. M. O’Mara, *The Index of Middle English Prose: Handlist XIII: Manuscripts in Lambeth Palace Library*. (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1999), p. 72.

⁴⁵⁹ See CUL, page 222 and SJC 109. Although there are some small differences in the hand, this seems to be the result of the addition of hairlines and feet to the hand in CUL, giving the impression of *gothica textualis* to match the rest of the manuscript, while SJC retains a simplified version of the same.

With three sources as witnesses, what can be learned about the ways in which the nuns moved about their cloister, and how this movement was meaningful to them?

As already stated, the *Myroure* lists a number of feasts that reuse chants and prayers from the course of the week's celebrations because they "haue som conuenyence to the feaste or to the tyme that they ar sette to be songe in," and the processionalists bear this out, at least in part.⁴⁶⁰ SA and SJC both employ the final Response from the second lesson at Matins on Thursday, *Videte miraculum mater* for Feast of the Purification (2 February). This feast used the Thursday lesson, according to the *Myroure*.⁴⁶¹ SA and CUL use *Felix namque es*, a response for the third lesson at Thursday's Matins, for another "Thursday" festival, the Visitation.⁴⁶² All three manuscripts use the final response for Wednesday's Matins on St Anne's Day (a Wednesday feast).⁴⁶³ The Assumption of the Virgin – a "Saturday" feast – uses an Antiphon and a Response from Saturday.⁴⁶⁴ The use of responsories from Matins occurs throughout the Bridgettine Calendar.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶⁰ *Myroure*, p. 278

⁴⁶¹ See SA, p. 21 ff, and SJC, fol 5v ff.

⁴⁶² See SA, p. 130 ff and CUL, i ff. *Felix namque* is missing from SJC. This festival also uses (in SA and CUL, but not in SJC) *O ineffabiliter*, the final antiphon for the third lesson on Tuesday's Matins, and *Ave regina celorum* (again, in SA and CUL, but not SJC).

⁴⁶³ *Beata mater anna* (SA, p. 150, SJC, fol. 62r, and CUL, p. 32), the first piece presented for this feast in the processional manuscripts.

⁴⁶⁴ These are the Matins response at the third lesson, *Super salutem et omnem*, and the Lauds antiphon *Que es ista que* (SA, p. 160ff, SJC, fol 66r ff, and CUL, p. 49 ff).

⁴⁶⁵ Matins Responsories are appropriated for Trinity Sunday, Dedication Day, Michelmas, the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Feast of St Anne, the Nativity of the BVM, the Feast of the Circumcision, Candlemas, the Visitation of the BVM, Palm Sunday, and the Assumption of the BVM.

This is not, however, the only borrowing that occurs between festial and ferial offices. SA also uses the first response from the third lesson on Saturday's Matins, *Ave gratia plena dei* on Candlemas; *O ineffabiliter*, the final antiphon for the third lesson on Tuesday's Matins, and *Ave regina celorum*, an antiphon for Monday's Compline office, appear in SA and CUL for the feast of the Visitation of the BVM.⁴⁶⁶ The cross-pollination of one ferial office with another occurs throughout the processionals, but there is no feast in the calendar that borrows entirely from the day of the Week "proper" to it without any extraneous material.⁴⁶⁷ From where do these chants come, if not the Bridgettine Office?

Many are from the *Graduale Romanum*, or the general use of the church, but a number of the additions to manuscripts that appear to be later additions, like the troped Kyrie found in the opening flyleaves of SJC (i – iv) are from the Sarum rite specifically. It can be very hard to locate specific sources for any given chant, and the Bridgettine processionals seem to engage in a high order of liturgical *bricolage*, not only mixing Peter of Skänninge's material for specifically Bridgettine use with material from the broader Roman rite, but also locating Syon's processionals in a specific locality through the underpinnings of the Sarum Office.

The processionals diverge from each other on a number of points. For instance, the service for Easter is only found in SA and SJC, but its treatment of the prose *Salve festa dies* in each is exemplary of both. In SA, the rubric for the paschal feast says merely:

⁴⁶⁶ See SA, p 21 ff; SA, p. 130 ff and CUL, i ff.

⁴⁶⁷ This includes *Corpus Christi*, the Feast of St John, the Feast of Sts Peter and Paul, the Feast of St Catherine, and all of the feasts in honor of St Bridget.

*In die pasche ad processionem domine sorores in medio processionis
cantent prosa. Ita quod primus uersus in exeundo.*⁴⁶⁸

And, after the prose *Salve*, another antiphon with its verse is given (*Regina celi letare*, p. 52) with a marginal note in Thomas Raille's hand: *Regina Celi*. The rubric for this is merely *In introitu chori ant.* On this same occasion, SJC is more thorough:

Uppon ester day at procession, too sustris . the too chauntresses or too othir that the cheef chantresse allignyth shal in the myddes of the quere bygnne this prose: *Salve festa dies*. And ther standing stil shal synge the said uerse unto the ende whiche uerse the quere than first goynge forthe and not afor shal repete . the too sustres that bygan goynge in the myddis of the procession. And than too aloon shal synge the uery uerse of the prose and rest at euery uerse eende. And th quere shal at euery uerse eende. shal repete the first uerse. *Salve festa dies*. And this forme is to be kept. When eny prose of *Salve festa dies* is haad at procession.⁴⁶⁹

Every time the *Salve* appears in SJC from this point forward, this overdetermined stage direction is dropped. Relying instead on a shorthand similar to SA as it does on the Feast of the Visitation:

In the fest of the uisitacion of oure lady at procession too sustres in myddis of the quere shal begyne this prose.⁴⁷⁰

This sort of explicit articulation of prayers and certain songs in SJC and CUL is totally missing from SA. All three manuscripts suggest additional chants in the margin of the text to extend the time for procession if necessary. This shorthand stage direction indicates that many of the nuns would either have committed these chants to memory (and would have started on the same incipit tone, thus making for an easy transition), or have, at the very least, the first few lines memorized, allowing the singing of their fellow

⁴⁶⁸ SA, p. 46. "On Easter Sunday, at the procession, the sisters should sing this verse in the middle of the procession. And, as they exit, they will sing the first verse again."

⁴⁶⁹ SJC, 14r – 14v.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid, 55v.

nuns to begin as they paged back through the booklet to the appropriate page. In other words, the processionalists suggest a recognition that music was often used to fill the time of physical labor, rather than the specific words or chants themselves being of unique import to any one time or place.

There are some small differences in metrical notation – groupings of neumes in three notes in one manuscript, and in groups of two-and-one in another – instances in which one manuscript includes the totality of an antiphon, verse, or response, and another gives merely the incipit, the inclusion of prayers *in toto* versus in part, and the inclusion of English rubrics in addition to or in place of Latin ones. These differences provide for the needs of a congregation of sixty nuns, all of whom would have had varying degrees of intimacy with the liturgy in a number of modalities: whether this was in reading music, in reading Latin, or in remembering the necessary movements of the choral body around a monastic space. Perhaps the newly professed would – after a time spent training with the explicitly directive and highly wrought SJC – have been able to handle the aporia of SA or CUL with aplomb.

Angelic song and the English nation

With the processionalists one can see a cloister at work, meeting the needs of its sisters in terms of their literary education, their spiritual life, and their intimacy with liturgical forms. One also sees the ways in which this liturgical awareness opens out into broader historical contexts; through the addition of feasts of St Bridget and her daughter Catherine, and the appropriation of extant songs as well as the creation of new ones for the purpose, Syon presents itself as a space that changed and grew as time went on. But

how did Syon interact with the world beyond its walls? The final section of this chapter will investigate one way in which Syon affected the political situation of the 15th and 16th centuries as well as post-Reformation literary imagination of its Catholic past.

Perhaps the most famous literary passage alluding to Syon abbey is the rousing speech Shakespeare puts in the mouth of Henry V before the battle of Agincourt:

O God of battles! steel my soldiers' hearts;
Possess them not with fear; take from them now
The sense of reckoning, if the opposed numbers
Pluck their hearts from them. Not to-day, O Lord,
O, not to-day, think not upon the fault
My father made in compassing the crown!
I Richard's body have interred anew;
And on it have bestow'd more contrite tears
Than from it issued forced drops of blood:
Five hundred poor I have in yearly pay,
Who twice a-day their wither'd hands hold up
Toward heaven, to pardon blood; and I have built
Two chantries, where the sad and solemn priests
Sing still for Richard's soul.⁴⁷¹

This passage opens many an article on modern critical analyses of Syon's political and religious import. The two chantries, of course, mean Syon and Sheen, and Henry's speech provides a clear articulation of medieval spirituality, at least as it was viewed by a post-Reformation playwright. It outlines a fungible numerical relationship: drops of blood are exchanged for contrite tears; there is one reinterred body for one legitimate crown. Even the "opposed numbers" of French and English depict an economy of exchange. The whole speech performs a delicate balance: between sin and compunction, past and present, and the nostalgic, backward-looking affect of medieval penance. This

⁴⁷¹ Shakespeare, William. *Henry V.* in *The Norton Shakespeare: Based on the Oxford Edition*. Greenblatt, Stephen, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard, and Katherine Eisaman Maus, Eds. (London: W. W. Norton, 2008), IV.i.2139-2155.

retrospectival view of Syon's political purpose shows up in a number of Early Modern texts, from Holinshed's *Chronicle* to Thomas Robinson's 1622 *Anatomie of a Nunnery at Lisbon in Portugall*.⁴⁷²

Shakespeare's history is, however, revisionist. As stated previously, the *Regula Salvatoris* entrusted the governance of Syon to the abbess – she was answerable only to her father confessor. But it is, for Shakespeare, only the priests who “sing for Richard's soul.” They are engaged in a chantry economy, singing masses in perpetuity. The women are absent here, silent. While Shakespeare presents medieval spirituality as inherently backward-looking, he also presents it as historically male. However, the historicizing and nation-building aspects of Syon do something more important; although Shakespeare, and much of contemporary literary criticism suggests that the historical import of Syon pointed backwards – that the role Syon played in defining the English nation was largely contained within the British Isles, its main purpose to legitimize the Lancastrian regime after Henry IV's coup and the death of Richard II. An alternative to the narrative of Shakespeare's speech exists: that is, that Syon should be read as a space concerned both with international politics and with futurity. This alternate narrative begins with Bridget of Sweden's *Revelationes Celestis*, works its way through Hoccelve's *Regiment of Princes*, and ends with the blind John Audelay and Margery Kempe standing.

⁴⁷² A number of references to Syon exist in the literature of the late 16th- and early 17th-century, and these represent the monastic space as medievalizing and backward-looking (as so often happens in Protestant depictions of Catholicism). Holinshed's *Chronicles*, Charles Wriothesley's *Chronicle of England During the Reigns of the Tudors, from A.D. 1485-1559* and Thomas Robinson's 1622 pamphlet the nuns of Syon (*The Anatomie of a Nunnery*) are just a small selection.

Before moving on to an analysis of the texts at hand, a couple background points should be stressed. First, although the *Myroure* uses the heuristic “Syon,” to refer to Henry V’s religious foundation, this was not the house’s entire name. Its official name was the “Abbey of St Saviour and St Bridget at Syon,” founded in the same year that Henry invaded France and fought at Agincourt.⁴⁷³ It was also part not of a double monastic foundation – as Shakespeare suggests – but a triple one: the French Celestine house Henry founded along the Thames at the same time was never built; Syon, on the other hand, became one of the wealthiest and most important monasteries for the remainder of the pre-Reformation period. Second, five years after the battle of Agincourt, Henry V married Catherine of Valois, daughter of Charles VI of France and eventual progenitor not merely of Henry VI, but of the Tudor line as well. Why are these points important?

In *Prophecy and Public Affairs in Later medieval England*, Helen Coote discusses the role that Bridget of Sweden’s *Revelationes celestis* played in the political landscape of 15th-century England.¹ In her study, Coote remarks that Henry V “was *capable* of reading, understanding, and interpreting Bridget politically, but whether he actually *did* this is a question which cannot be answered conclusively.”¹ But the facts are these: copies of Bridget’s prophetic visions were available in England by 1400. In particular, book IV—the section pertaining to the political situation between France and England—was included in a number of *florilegia* and *compendia* of prophetic manuscripts

⁴⁷³ And, at one point, the *Myroure* refers to the song of the Bridgettines as akin to that of the Carthusians in terms of its interior scope.

commissioned by the Lancastrian regime.⁴⁷⁴ This book devotes a number of its visions to the issue of *secular* reconciliation between England and France: Bridget explicitly outlines her desire for the cessation of the Hundred-Years War.⁴⁷⁵ Here, as Bridget recounts, Mary the Mother of God prays – along with St Denis – for mercy on the Kingdom of France. “I pray the wyth Denys and othir sayntes whose bodys restes in the land of this realme of Frauns,” she says,

and the saules are in heuen, haue mercy of this kyngdome. I se as it were two fell bestis, and moste fers of ther kynde. One coueytes to swelowe all that he may gete, and the more he etys, the more hungry he is, ne his hungir is as neuer filled. The seconde beste couetes to be aboue all othir and to styte vpe therto.⁴⁷⁶

Here, Bridget likens the kings of France and England to savage animals. Both kings, having forgotten the laws of clemency and proper Christian sovereignty, literally rip apart their kingdoms in their rapacious, gluttonous, and covetous jaws. And, as Bridget’s

⁴⁷⁴ Lesley Coote discusses the role that Bridget of Sweden’s *Revelationes coelestis* played in the political landscape of 15th-century England. In her study, Coote remarks that Henry V “was *capable* of reading, understanding, and interpreting Bridget politically, but whether he actually *did* this is a question which cannot be answered conclusively.” Coote’s historical sensibility precludes a leap from textual evidence to hermeneutics and political action. In fact, as much as anything historical can be answered conclusively, Henry’s “political” reading of the Revelations is provable. Syon is the manifestation of that political reading. In this paper, I will outline how four writers, starting with Bridget of Sweden herself, and from there Thomas Hoccleve, John Audelay, and Margery Kempe, provide evidence for a 15th-century religio-political vision of Syon that is quite at odds with 16th- and 17th-century depictions of it. See Coote, Lesley, *Prophecy and Public Affairs in Later medieval England*. (Woodbridge: York medieval Press, 2000).

⁴⁷⁵ Chapter 104 of book four—which I will quote from in the Middle English version—focuses its political-prophetic force in the critical interpretation of the war between England and France that took up most of the 14th century.

⁴⁷⁶ Bridget of Sweden. *Liber Celestis of St Bridget of Sweden: The Middle English version in British Library MS Claudius B I, together with a life from the same manuscript*. (London: EETS, 1987), Bk IV, Chapter 104, p. 342.

continues, the vision stretches beyond royalty, and into the other medieval estates.

Kings, commoners and religious all plea for the cessation of war:

The first king says: "I dreede to lose and wantt alle. And of this fere, by the whilke he dredes reprove of the worlde, he turnes hym to me and sais, "O Mary, pray for me." the othir kynge thinkes thus: "Wald God I were in my first astate. I am werey." And tharefor he turnes him to me. The seconde is the voice of the comonte, that ilka day prays for pese. The thirde is the voice of thi derlynges that sais thus "We wepe no3t the bodys of thame that are dede, ne pouert, ne for othir harme, bot we wepe for the saules that peryshes ilkea day. And therfor, lady, pray thi son that the saules may be saue."⁴⁷⁷

As in Shakespeare's imagining of Henry V's speech, the king, the commons, and the religious orders are placed in a delicate balance within a system of spiritual and temporal ethics. But, unlike Shakespeare's speech, this vision of the nation is anticipatory, prophetic, forward-looking. The very presence of death and the perishing of souls "ilkea day" move time along, pushing history forward in a system of prayerful petition and pain. This vision ends, almost eschatologically, with Christ, who finally provides a solution to the problem of perpetual war:

Where pees is, certayne ther am I. And therfor, yf those kynges two of Fraunce and England wille haue pees, I sall gyfe thame perpetuall pees. Bot verray pees may no3t be hade bot trewth and ryght be loued. Therfor, for one of tho kynges hase ryght, it pleses me that pes be made be mariage, and so that the realme may come to the lawfull aire[...] whem men of Fraunce takes to thame verray mekenes, than sall the kyngdom come to the ryght aire and gude pees.⁴⁷⁸

In this system, it is the Savior who shows up to heal the seemingly hopeless situation. "I ame verray pees," Christ says. The war between France and England will end if two conditions are met: if one King marries into the royal family of the other, and, if France,

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid, Bk IV, Chapter 104, p. 344.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid, Bk IV, Chapter 105, p. 344.

as a unified nation, allows itself to be bridled by meekness, just governance, and the eventual Franco-English heir to its throne. The foundation of Syon Abbey, Henry V's claim for France, and his eventual marriage seem to be a political performative reading of Bridget's *Revelations*.

But, did Henry read Bridget? And did the citizens of England understand Bridget as a prophetic basis for political action? There were copies of this chapter of Bridget's *Revelations* in circulation in the years leading up to Henry's invasion of Harfleur, as the manuscript record attests; but there is another, literary adaptation of the *Revelations* which points to Henry's investment in Bridget's text as a model for his rule and foreign policy. This is Hoccleve's *Regiment of Princes*, which was written 1410-1 during then-Prince Henry's regency, and the future Henry V both commissioned the work and promulgated it.⁴⁷⁹ While what is perhaps remembered best about the *Regiment* is its paean to Chaucer and the narrator's problematic relationship with his own subjectivity, there are – obviously – other things going on in Hoccleve's longest sustained work. Within the last few stanzas of the poem, Hoccleve presents his final, ultimate exemplar in a long list of good rulers and the one that serves as the paragon of an English King:

And yit myn herte stuffid is with wo
To see thyn unkyndly disseverance. [...]
Of France and Engeland, o Cristen Princes,
Syn that your style of worthynesse is ronge
Thurghout the world in al the provinces,
If that of yow mighte be red or songe
That yee were oon in herte, ther nis tonge
That might expresse how profitable and good
Unto al peple it were of Cristen blood.
Yee hem ensamplen, yee been hir miroures;
They folwen yow. What sorwe lamentable

⁴⁷⁹ See Coote, Blyth, et al.

Is causid of your werres sharpe shoures
 Ther woot no wight; it is irreparable.
 O noble Cristen Princes honourable,
 For Him that for yow souffred passioun,
 Of Cristen blood haveth compassioun!
 Allas, what peple hath your were slayn!
 What cornes waastid and down trode and shent!
 How many a wyf and mayde hath be bylayn,
 Castels down bete, and tymbred howses brent
 And drawen down and al totore and rent!
 The harm ne may nat rekned be ne told;
 This were wexith al to hoor and old.⁴⁸⁰

This selection is a poetic translation of Bridget's *Revelationes*, Book IV, Chapter 104-105, and one which has gone unnoted in critical literature on Syon Abbey. Hoccleve makes a couple important changes to his Bridgettine source-text: For Bridget, the Kings of England and France are two different subjects, two beasts. Hoccleve, on the other hand, paints the English and French as two members of the same body. In order for the glorious "singing" of nationhood to fill Europe, the actual unification of these bodies must come to pass. Hoccleve goes on to explicitly name Bridget as the operator of peace:

The book of Revelaciouns of Bryde
 Expressith how Cryst thus seide hir unto:
 "I am pees verray, there I wole abyde;
 Whereas pees is, noon othir wole I do;
 Of France and Engeland the kynges two,
 If they wole have pees, pees perpetuel
 They shul han." Thus hir book seith, woot I wel.⁴⁸¹

The marginal notation, in this section, refers the reader to the 105th chapter of Book IV of Bridget, quoting the Latin in its entirety.⁴⁸² Hoccleve, perhaps commissioned to write

⁴⁸⁰ Hoccleve, Thomas. *The Regiment of Princes* (Kalamazoo: TEAMS, 1999), ll 5309-5310, 5321-5341.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid, ll 5384-5390

this poem *by* the Prince a mere five years before the invasion of France and the foundation of Syon, reappropriates Bridget's vision for Lancastrian polity, casting it as one concerned with Anglo-French relations, territorial claims, and the cessation of war.

How does this relate to Syon? It seems obvious that Henry used both Bridget's *Revelationes* and Hoccleve's *Regiment* as the *casus belli* for his invasion of France. And Syon was integral to the notion of this invasion as part of a just war. Not only did it show his support for the Bridgettine project – revelations, liturgy, and all – but a glimpse into contemporary late medieval interpretations of Syon as an international political space gesture to this as well. Take, for instance, John Audelay's poem 23, written in the early 1420s, only a few years after Syon's foundation and the Battle of Agincourt, and the poem which began this chapter:

Beside the Chene, sothly, seuen myle fro Lundun,
Our gracious Kyng Herre the V wes founder of that place,
Haile! he let priuelege that hole place and callid hit Bregitsion;
The pope conferme ther-to his bul thro³ his special grace,
In the worchip of Saint Bregit,
To al here pilgrims an Lammes-day,
And also mydlentyn Sunday,
This pardon to last fore 3euer and ay;
God graunt vs part of hit.⁴⁸³

The pardon of Syon operates within the system of authority that connects Syon to London, London to the King, the King to Bridget, Bridget to the Pope, and the Pope to God. Here, time operates as both infinite – the pardon will last forever – as well as

⁴⁸² “*Libro 4 de revlationibus sancte Brigide, capitulo cv: Christus dicit, Ego sum pax, et cetera. Si reges Francie et Anglie voluerint habere pacem, ego dabo eis perpetuam pacem, sed pax vera non potest haberi nisi veritas et justitia diligentur. Ideo quia alter regum habet justitiam, placet mihi quod per matrimonium fiat pax, et sic regnum ad legitimum heredem poterit pervenire, et cetera.*” Ibid, p. 251.

⁴⁸³ Audelay, poem 23, ll. 136-144.

particular: the destination of Bregitsion is open to the universal only during specific liturgical feasts.⁴⁸⁴ Audelay continues:

Mekil is Ynglan i-hold to pray for Kyng Herre,
That so worthele our worchip in euerоче place,
Both in Fraunce, and in Breten, and in Normandy,
That oure faders had lost before, he get a3ayn be grace,
And more-ouer speciali
To make soche a house of religioun,
And to preueleche ther-to that gracious pardon,
Al Ynglond to haue remyssioun;
Now Crist on his soule haue merce.⁴⁸⁵

Shakespeare's system of penance, along with its retrospective directionality, is nowhere to be found here. Rather than Henry V creating Syon to serve as a redemptive act for his father, Audelay depicts it as a movement forward in time, and the pious action of a ruler committed to international peace. The space is to be read as itself a portion of the political fulfillment of Bridget's Revelations, meant to formalize, authorize, and broadcast the reacquisition of "Fraunce[...] Breten, (and) Normandy." The pardon itself is physical evidence of the providence of God working within this system. In fact, in Audelay's formulation, it appears that Syon's foundation is meant not to exculpate the sins of Henry IV, but, rather, to expiate the entire country in advance of the invasion of France. Thus, Syon's liturgical performance both prefigures and is necessitated by the war in France and continental territorial acquisition.

⁴⁸⁴ For de Certeau, a place (*lieu*) indicates stability within a framework of rules; the space (*espace*), on the other hand, is a *lieu* that is in *use* by actors within a system. dC continues: "space is a practiced place... in the same way, an act of reading is the space produced by the practice of a particular place." See de Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 117.

⁴⁸⁵ Audelay, poem 23, ll. 145-153.

The liturgy of the *Cantus Sororem*, composed by a Swedish saint for a Roman pope and a European polity was performed by enclosed bodies in England. And yet, these enclosed women operated on the nation, both backward in time in a restitution of Richard II and Henry IV's souls, but also forward in time. The foundation of Syon was part of a program that reclaimed conventual space for England, orienting it both inwards in introspective piety and outwards in a gesture towards national religious responsibility and international allegiances.⁴⁸⁶

There is one more chant found in the Processionals of Syon that deserves some mention in this context, particularly because its idiosyncratic tone – which does not appear to be the one most commonly in use in the Catholic Church – appears in the Bridgettine processionals. Both a Sarum tone and one used by the Bridgettines, this chant, the *Quam pulchra es*, unites the chants of the nuns of Syon and the monks: at least once in their worship, both the men and women would have sung the same thing. This same tone was, interestingly enough, also used as the ground for a motet by John Pyamour (fl 1418), an English composer unknown except for this setting of this very popular Marian antiphonal text. A clerk of Henry V's Chapel between 1416 and 1420, when the king commissioned him to impress boy choristers to take with him to France. Modern scholarship claims that the antiphon chant for the *Quam pulchra es* is not used but this is not the case. Rather, the melodic line follows that which can be found in the St

⁴⁸⁶ In the Parliament of 1413, when the future Henry V served as regent for his ailing father, an act was passed moving all alien priories, fees, advowsons, lands, tenements, rents, services, franchises, liberties, and commodities ("*priories aliens, ovesqe les fees, avowesons, terres, tenementz, rentz, services, fraunchises, libertees et toutz autres commoditees.*") into the hands of the king. This excepted "conventual alien priories inhabited by religious Englishmen" (*et forspris priories aliens conventuelx enhabitez ovesqe religious Engloises.*) (1413.XX. iv-14, col. a)

John's processional, and the opening notes would have been identifiable as the same chant used by the nuns of Syon.⁴⁸⁷ In essence, the liturgy of the nuns and brothers of Syon would have, in the opening salvos of Henry V's campaign in France, have had an accoustic presence far beyond their geographical scope, one far more florid than the staid metrics of their monophonic chant.

Through their liturgy, their printed material, and their manuscript reading, the nuns of Syon created a liturgical environment with a performed range far beyond the walls of the Abbey itself. The types of charitable song seen in John Norton and Richard Methley, Hilton and the *Cloud of Unknowing* – texts that were central to Syon's devotional life as well as to the devotional life of the nation – complimented this song through a form of devotional reading that highlights the important language and private rapture for choral performance.⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁷ Two continental manuscripts retain Pyamor's composition of *Quam pulchra es*, which is his only known composition. These are ff 93v-94r of MS alpha.X.1.11, a manuscript of polyphony from the 15th century with an Italian provenance, ('Modena B; ModB') and ff 172v-173r of MS 1379 [92], a manuscript of polyphony, c. 1430-45; with a provenance from Switzerland, also known as 'Trent 92'. See Burstyn, Shai. "Early 15th-Century Polyphonic Settings of *Song of Songs* Antiphons," *Acta Musicologica*, International Musicological Society, Vol. 49, Fasc 2. (1977) : 200-227.

⁴⁸⁸ These devotional texts and others are well known as part of the library of the nuns. See De Hamel, Christopher. *The Library of the Nuns of Syon and their Peregrinations after the Reformation.* (Arundel: The Roxburghe Club, 1991); Cullum, P.H. " 'Yf lak of charyte be not ower hynderauwnce': Margery Kempe, Lynn, and the practice of the spiritual and bodily works of mercy." *A Companion to the Book of Margery Kempe*. John H. Arnold and Katherine J. Lewis, Eds. (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004), p. 177-93.

RETURN

Silent Song and the Corporate Body

In 2005, Philip Gröning's film, *Die grosse Stille*, premiered at the Toronto Film Festival. The movie follows the life of the monks of the Grand Chartreuse, a Carthusian monastery high in the French Alps (which is the mother house of the order, and just so happens to be where we get Chartreuse liqueur from). Carthusian monasteries are not cenobitic (community-dwelling) in the common sense of the word, as are Benedictines or Bridgettines. Rather, they are a group of hermits, each with his own cell. They pray their liturgical hours almost entirely in solitary devotion, and come together only in the dark of night to sing the office of Matins. *Die grosse Stille* – or, in its English translation, *Into Great Silence* – is an odd movie, but one that reflects the nature of the Carthusian order itself. At nearly three hours long, it contains no dialogue. It has no narrator, and no plot. As the title suggests, contemplative silence is the structure and the substance of this film.

At the same time, *Die grosse Stille* highlights for the viewer not *silence* so much as it does attentive listening, just as the muted color palette of browns and grays makes red window-frames pop, and just as the stark verticality of the chapel is rigid against the sinuous curve of tree branches against snow. In this space of near silence, the most powerful moments come in complete darkness. In a part of the film I haven't shown, two monks light a candle as Matins begins. They stand in front of an antiphoner and intone the opening chant of the office. After a few notes, they snuff out the light. And, as if blind to the darkness, the twenty or so other monks respond, their memories supplying the notes. The lack of commentary and the absence of music stresses the natural, rhythmic soundtrack of monastic life. Bells ring for prayer, melting ice drops on damp

stone floors, and an axe thuds on firewood—as the viewer descends into the realm of meditative receptivity, so do these noises... until even the rocking of a lone monk in silent, solitary prayer seems to carry with it a certain weight of music, and of pregnant sonority in the lack of audiation. Gröning himself has stated that the film was meant to do just this: to produce a performative space carved from the rhythms of silence.⁴⁸⁹ Perhaps he didn't realize it, but Gröning's film doesn't just reproduce monastic devotion, it also reproduces medieval theories of music. The appeal of *musica celestis* abides.

⁴⁸⁹ See Johnson, William. "Into Great Silence: William Johnson on Philip Gröning's Absorbing Documentary of Monastic Life in a Remote Corner of the Alps." *Film Quarterly*, 2007. For Gröning's comments on the film, see Zito, Angelo. "Talking about Into Great Silence: Interview with Philip Gröning," *The Revealer*, 26 Feb. 2007. (<http://therevealer.org/archives/2657>)

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